



# The Tabernacle

The Tabernacle, according to the Hebrew Bible, was the portable earthly dwelling place of God amongst the children of Israel from the time of the Exodus from Egypt through the conquering of the land of Canaan.

The word *tabernacle* means "dwelling place." Any place someone dwells is a tabernacle. The term is also sometimes used for a temporary dwelling place. Thus the tent-like sanctuary that the Jews used before the Temple was built was called the Tabernacle, because God dwelt there. Similarly, for the feast of *Sukkot* the Hebrews erected temporary shelters to live in for the festival, which is often called "the feast of tabernacles" or "the feast of booths" as a result

The tabernacle in Church is so named because it is a place where Christ dwells in the Eucharist. It also helps prevent the profanation of the Eucharist. Canon Law of the Church requires, "The tabernacle in which the Eucharist is regularly reserved is to be immovable, made of solid or opaque material, and locked so that the danger of profanation may be entirely avoided" (CIC 938 §3).

The Holy Eucharist may be reserved only on one altar or one place in any Church, and a vigil lamp must burn at all times to indicate and honour the presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. The tabernacle "should be placed in a part of the Church that is prominent, conspicuous, beautifully decorated, and suitable for prayer" (Canon 938).

The tabernacle also provides a location where the Eucharist can be kept for the adoration of the faithful and for later use (e.g., distribution to the sick).

In St Patrick's Church there is a second Tabernacle on the Sacred Heart altar. This Tabernacle is one of repose and is usually empty except when Hosts consecrated at the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Maunday Thursday are kept in repose until needed on Good Friday. The Consecrated Hosts return to the main Tabernacle during the Easter Vigil Mass on Holy Saturday.