

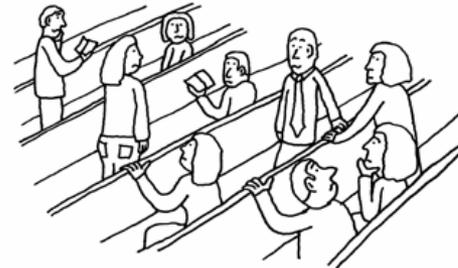
Why We Do What We Do & When We Do It!

The Ritual Language of the Mass

STANDING AND SITTING



SEE WHETHER IT SAYS ANYTHING
IN THE SERVICE BOOK



WATCH TO SEE WHAT
OTHER PEOPLE ARE DOING



LOOK OUT FOR SUBTLE HINTS
GIVEN BY THE CLERGY



IF IN DOUBT ADOPT
A 'MID WAY' POSITION



The Big WHY



POST-SYNODAL APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION SACRAMENTUM CARITATIS
OF THE HOLY FATHER BENEDICT XVI (2007) (§64)

- The Church's great liturgical tradition teaches us that **fruitful participation in the liturgy requires that one be personally conformed to the mystery being celebrated.**
- the Synod of Bishops want to help the faithful make their interior dispositions correspond to their gestures and words. Otherwise, however carefully planned and executed our liturgies may be, they would risk falling into a certain ritualism.
- Given the close relationship between the ars celebrandi (art of the celebration) and an actuosa participatio (active participation), it must first be said that "**the best catechesis on the Eucharist is the Eucharist itself, celebrated well.**"



Standing



- The fundamental posture in liturgy is standing.
- Standing is a natural gesture of respect toward authority. This is why the assembly stands for the celebrant's entrance and exit, and during the proclamation of the Gospel, just as the Israelites stood upright as they listened to God's word. Indeed, standing was the normal position for Jewish prayer and this custom passed to Christianity as is witnessed by murals in the catacombs.
- Today the faithful mostly remain standing whenever they are associated to the solemn prayer of the celebrant. The upright position is that of the heavenly elect as seen in the Book of Revelation 7:9 and 15:2. The Fathers of the Church considered this position as expressive of the holy freedom of God's children.



Kneeling



- Kneeling is also an ancient posture of prayer. It seems that kneeling, both in the Christian and the Jewish tradition, was the posture used in especially intense periods of prayer and repentance.
- Thus, Solomon dedicating the very first Temple to the Lord, prayed “kneeling down in the presence of all the multitude of Israel, and lifting up his hands towards Heaven” (2 Chronicles 6:13; cf. 1 Kings 8:54).
- St. Stephen is described before his martyrdom in intense prayer: “falling on his knees, he cried with a loud voice” (Acts 7:59).
- St. Peter prayed kneeling when he asked God to raise Tabitha from the dead (Acts 9:40).
- We see that the Lord himself prayed kneeling at the most intense moment of his agony in the Garden: “kneeling down, he prayed” (Luke 22:41).

Sitting

- We sit during the readings and homily because they are instructional.



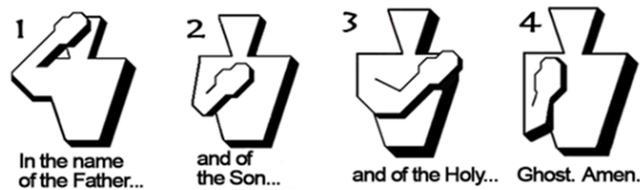
101 Questions About the Catholic Mass – Thy kingdom Come (2007)

Blessing Ourselves with Holy Water

- Holy Water is used for many reasons, but its most important use is during Baptism. The Rite of Baptism for Children (p.xi) states that “Baptism incorporates us into Christ and forms us into God’s people. This first sacrament pardons all our sins, rescues us from the power of darkness, and brings us to the dignity of adopted children, a new creation through water and the Holy Spirit.” So, when we walk into a Catholic church and bless ourselves with Holy Water, it is a way of recalling our baptism. It brings us back to what has brought us there in the first place. **It is a reminder of who we are, and to whom we belong.**



Seeds of Faith, Good News from the Archdiocese of Moncton



Sign of the Cross

- One of the principal gestures of Christian worship is the sign of the cross — tracing the cross on our body by touching our head, abdomen, left and right shoulder signifies our salvation through Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, a reminder of our baptism, and of our commitment to Christ.
- It is also a sign of our worship of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (For this reason, we make the sign of the cross whenever the sacred name of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is invoked, either in acclamation or blessing or absolution.
- We make the sign of the cross following the confession of sins, because the absolution is made in the name of the Trinity and because it is the cross of Christ that makes possible our forgiveness.
- Making the sign of the cross before and after we receive Communion signifies that in the sacrament of the Eucharist, we recognize Christ crucified, risen, and present with us.
- We make the sign of the cross at the blessing at the very end of the liturgy because the blessing is made in the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

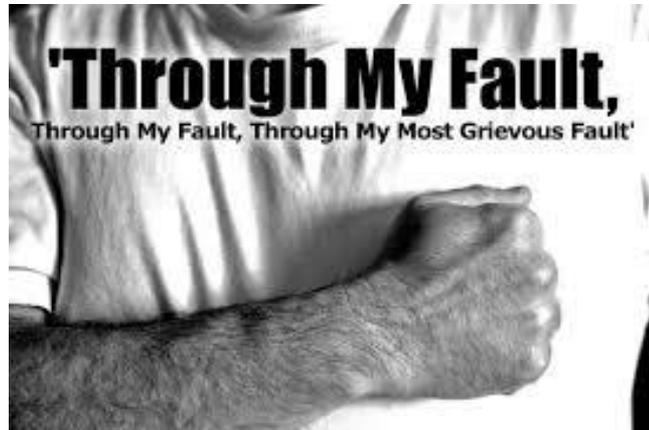
Genuflecting

- Genuflecting is an act of devotion consisting of falling onto one knee. Literally it is 'knee bending,' bending the right knee to the floor and rising again. This gesture involves a profession of dependence or helplessness and is naturally adopted for prayer and worship in general.
- It is often an act of reverence and adoration given to the Lord Jesus really present in the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle in Catholic churches.
- Genuflection apparently originated as a gesture of respect of a knight before a king. It appears to have been introduced in the Church in the middle ages and the tradition became obligatory before the end of the fifteenth century.
- Today, the faithful who pass the presence of the Blessed Sacrament are expected to genuflect as a sign of devotion.



Striking the Breast

- The gesture of striking the breast expresses sorrow, unworthiness, extreme humility. For Christians, this ritual gesture expresses our contrition, our sense of sinfulness and unworthiness before God.
- Striking of the breast as a liturgical act is prescribed in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass during the Confiteor at the phrase "Through my fault" (three times).



Gestures of Worship: Relearning Our Ritual Language by Helen Hull Hitchcock



Bowing



- There are two kinds of bow: a bow of the head and a bow of the body.
- a) A bow of the head is made when the three Divine Persons are named together and at the names of Jesus, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the Saint in whose honor Mass is being celebrated.
- b) A bow of the body, that is to say, a profound bow, is made to the altar; during the prayers *Munda cor meum* (Cleanse my heart) and *In spiritu humilitatis* (With humble spirit); in the Creed at the words *et incarnatus est* (and by the Holy Spirit . . . and became man); in the Roman Canon at the *Supplices te rogamus* (In humble prayer we ask you, almighty God). The same kind of bow is made by the Deacon when he asks for a blessing before the proclamation of the Gospel. In addition, the Priest bows slightly as he pronounces the words of the Lord at the Consecration.
- Bowing signifies reverence, respect, and gratitude. In the Creed we bow at the words that commemorate the Incarnation. We also bow as a sign of reverence before we receive Communion. The priest and other ministers bow to the altar, a symbol of Christ, when entering or leaving the sanctuary. As a sign of respect and reverence even in our speech, we bow our heads at the name of Jesus, at the mention of the Three Persons of the Trinity, at the name of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and at the name of the saint whose particular feast or memorial is being observed.

Our Father



- There is no prescribed posture for the hands during the Our Father and that, so far at least, neither the Holy See nor the U.S. bishops' conference has officially addressed it.
- The process for introducing any new rite or gesture into the liturgy in a stable or even binding manner is already contemplated in liturgical law. This process entails a two-thirds majority vote in the bishops' conference and the go-ahead from the Holy See before any change may take effect.
- Some people adopt the "orantes" posture during the Our Father, praying like the priest, with hands extended.
- The U.S. bishops' conference debated a proposal by some bishops to allow the use of the orantes posture while discussing the "American Adaptations to the General Instruction to the Roman Missal". The proposal failed to garner the required two-thirds majority of votes.



Peace Be With You



- The exchange of a sign of peace is a demonstration of your desire to be reconciled with your neighbor, whoever they are, before going to the altar to receive the Lord in Communion. It should be extended only to those closest to you and in a sober manner. A simple handshake is most common, although, sometimes, family members will exchange a kiss on the cheek. At this point in the mass, each of the faithful turns to his neighbor, saying: “Peace be with you,” with the response, “And also with you.”

ROAD MAP



QUESTIONS?

