

DIOCESE OF DALLAS

Policy on Posture at Mass

Posture at Mass

We communicate a great deal with our bodies, as in a handshake of greeting or agreement, standing for the singing of the national anthem. Likewise, prayer at Mass also requires movement. The postures and gestures of our body at Mass can help us to become more prayerful; they also show unity among those gathered for the celebration.

The Sign of the Cross: Arguably Christianity's most recognized prayer, we don't even need to say the words as we mark ourselves with this sign of our faith. At Mass we make the sign of the Cross with holy water as we come in and leave; as the Mass begins and at the final blessing, at the beginning and end of our silent prayer when we kneel. At home try making the sign of the cross when you leave home for the day or to begin car trips and family meal and bedtime prayers.

Genuflecting. When you come into church, genuflecting is the act of preparing and readying yourself for the presence of God. *Genuflect* comes from the Latin "to bend the knee." During the liturgy, the priest genuflects three times—after lifting both the bread and the cup and before communion. The congregation genuflects before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, usually when we enter and leave the church, as a sign of reverence to the presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

Praying with hands open. Known as the *orans*, the priest uses this posture for many prayers during the Mass including the Eucharistic Prayer. In many parishes the congregation uses it for the Lord's Prayer. At home try standing around the table for mealtime prayer as a change of pace.

Bowing is a common gesture of reverence in many cultures. We bow before we receive Communion. Priests, lectors, and anyone approaching the altar bows as well, because the altar is a symbol of Christ.

Kneeling is a posture of prayer associated with humility and submission. We kneel in prayer before Mass begins; during parts of the Eucharistic Prayer; and after communion. Try it with kids for bedtime prayers now and then.

