

Posture Change during the Eucharistic Prayer

From time to time it is worthwhile to examine why we do the things we do. This is especially true for us Catholics who wish to show proper reverence and awe for the Most Holy Eucharist. We know that what we do at Sacred Liturgy forms us, and others who observe us, in ways that sometimes supersedes words! This is especially true with bodily postures.

Some people point to an informality that continues to foster itself in our society: our casual manner in the way we address people by using only first names, our relaxed attire at social engagements and not “dressing up,” and the fact that we do not stand up when someone of importance walks into a room. It can also creep unconsciously into our celebration of Liturgy.

In order to counter this indifference and help foster a sense of awe and gratitude for the gift of the Eucharist, Bishop Vann has asked that we make a change in our posture during the latter part of the Eucharistic Prayer. Currently we stand from the Great Amen until after receiving Holy Communion. The faithful are now asked to start kneeling after the Lamb of God (Agnus Dei) in awe and veneration of what is taking place on the Altar of Sacrifice. This change is to be implemented in parishes by the last Sunday in August and will help us to prepare ourselves spiritually for the dedication of our Cathedral, where this posture change will become normative.

There are occasions when this posture won't be possible, such as when an individual is prevented by ill health, or for reasons of lack of space, of the large number of people present, or for another reasonable cause. It might not be possible in our communities that are worshipping in temporary Worships Spaces that don't enjoy the use of kneelers. However, we can all enjoy a heightened awareness and attentiveness to the sacred action. Through our increase mindfulness of “doing things differently,” this change in posture will hopefully help us become more conscious and intentional about our sense of reverence and awe of Jesus' Body and Blood.

This posture change is in keeping with the directives that we have been given in the General Instruction to the Roman Missal (GIRM), which is the “instruction manual” for how we celebrate Mass. The directives in the GIRM give us both universal norms for the Roman Catholic Church as well as “particular law” for the United States. It also gives authority to a Diocesan Bishop to establish norms for the benefit and well-being of the faithful for his particular diocese, which may vary from the surrounding dioceses and change over time. Our gestures and postures help to bring about a unity as we all do things the same way at the same time. It also helps to make clear the meanings of different parts of the Mass and fosters our participation in our Sacred Liturgy. Let all that we do help us enter into our prayer and worship to bring about our sanctification and that of our world.