

at the name of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and at the name of the saint whose particular feast or memorial is being observed (see GIRM, no. 275).

GENUFLECTING

As a sign of adoration, we genuflect by bringing our right knee to the floor. Many people also make the Sign of the Cross as they bend their knee. Traditionally, Catholics genuflect on entering and leaving church if the Blessed Sacrament is present in the sanctuary of the Church. The priest and deacon genuflect to the tabernacle on entering and leaving the sanctuary. The priest also genuflects in adoration after he shows the Body and Blood of Christ to the people after the consecration and again before inviting the people to Holy Communion.

ORANS

The priest frequently uses this ancient prayer posture, extending his hands to his sides, slightly elevated. *Orans* means “praying.” Early Christian art frequently depicts the saints and others standing in this posture, offering their prayers and surrendering themselves, with hands uplifted to the Lord, in a gesture that echoes Christ’s outstretched arms as he offered himself on the Cross.

PROSTRATING

In this rarely used posture, an individual lays full-length on the floor, face to the ground. A posture of deep humility, it signifies our willingness to share in Christ’s death so as to share in his Resurrection (see Rom 6). It is used at the beginning of the Celebration of the Lord’s Passion on Good Friday and also during the Litany of the Saints in the Rite of Ordination, when those to be ordained deacons, priests, and bishops prostrate themselves in humble prayer and submission to Christ.

SINGING

“By its very nature song has both an individual and a communal dimension. Thus, it is no wonder that singing together in church expresses so well the sacramental presence of God to his people” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Sing to the Lord*, no. 2). As we raise our voices as one in the prayers, dialogues, and chants of the Mass, most especially in the Eucharistic

Prayer, as well as the other hymns and songs, we each lend our individual voices to the great hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Triune God.

PRAYING IN UNISON

In the Mass, the worshiping assembly prays in one voice, speaking or singing together the words of the prayers. By saying the same words at the same time, we act as what we truly are—one Body united in Christ through the Sacrament of Baptism.

BEING SILENT

“Silence in the Liturgy allows the community to reflect on what it has heard and experienced, and to open its heart to the mystery celebrated” (*Sing to the Lord*, no. 118). We gather in silence, taking time to separate ourselves from the concerns of the world and enter into the sacred action. We reflect on the readings in silence. We may take time for silent reflection and prayer after Holy Communion. These times of silence are not merely times when nothing happens; rather, they are opportunities for us to enter more deeply in what God is doing in the Mass, and, like Mary, to keep “all these things, reflecting on them” in our hearts (Lk 2:19).

CONCLUSION

The Church sees in these common postures and gestures both a symbol of the unity of those who have come together to worship and also a means of fostering that unity. We are not free to change these postures to suit our own individual piety, for the Church makes it clear that our unity of posture and gesture is an expression of our participation in the one Body formed by the baptized with Christ, our head. When we stand, kneel, sit, bow, and sign ourselves in common action, we give unambiguous witness that we are indeed the Body of Christ, united in body, mind, and voice.

REFERENCE

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). *Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*. Pastoral Liturgy Series 4. Washington, DC: USCCB, 2007.

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