

Posture of the Faithful at Mass¹

The new Roman Missal and the adaptations approved and confirmed for the Dioceses of the United States of America make some minor changes to the posture² of the faithful at Mass. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal notes that: "...**uniformity in posture**, which must be observed by all participants, is a **sign of the unity** of the members of the Christian community gathered for the Sacred Liturgy: it both expresses and fosters the mind and spiritual attitude of the participants." (GIRM, no. 42) The postures listed below are required of all the faithful in the Archdiocese of Hartford.³ Most have been in practice.

<i>The moment in the Mass</i>	Posture	Applies
1. From the beginning of Mass until the First Reading	STAND	<i>worldwide</i> ⁴
2. From the first Reading until the Gospel Acclamation	SIT	<i>worldwide</i>
3. From the Gospel Acclamation until the end of the Gospel	STAND	<i>worldwide</i>
4. During the Homily	SIT	<i>worldwide</i>
5. From the Profession of Faith until the end of the Intercessions	STAND	<i>worldwide</i>
6. From the Offertory/ Preparation of the Gifts to the completion of the prayer of the priest: "Pray brethren...Father Almighty."	SIT	<i>worldwide</i>
7. From the beginning of the people's response: "May the Lord accept this sacrifice... for our good and the good of all his Church." to the end of the Holy, Holy	STAND	<i>new posture worldwide</i>
8. From the completion of the Holy, Holy until after the Amen of the Eucharistic Prayer	KNEEL	<i>in the USA</i>
9. From the beginning of the Our Father until the completion of the Lamb of God.	STAND	<i>worldwide</i>
10. From the completion of the Lamb of God (at the Behold the Lamb of God...) until the Distribution of Holy Communion	KNEEL	<i>in the USA</i>
11. When Receiving Holy Communion ⁵	STAND	<i>in the USA</i>
12. During the sacred silence after the Distribution of Holy Communion until the priest says: "Let us pray." to introduce the Prayer after Communion.	SIT OR KNEEL	<i>worldwide</i>
13. From the beginning of the Prayer after Communion until Mass ends.	STAND	<i>worldwide</i>

¹ The chart is adapted from one prepared by the Secretariat for the Liturgy of the USCCB.

² A modification in our practice is evident in # 6 and 7. The United States Bishops decided # 10 and 11. See note 5 below.

³ The **only exception** in the Archdiocese of Hartford being those physically unable to kneel for reasons of **age or infirmity**.

⁴ This refers to the Roman rite worldwide.

⁵ Holy Communion should be received standing. In the United States, the **common sign of reverence to be made immediately before** receiving Communion is a **bow of the head**. When Holy Communion is administered under both species, the communicant also bows the head before receiving from the chalice. Communion may be received on the tongue or in the hand at the discretion of the communicant.

The Rite of Peace: We offer the peace of Christ

Just before the time for Holy Communion, the priest turns to the people and says, "The peace of the Lord be with you always." We respond, "And also with you." Then, we are invited to extend a gesture of peace to one another. What is it that we actually are doing? A clue to the answer is found in the words of the priest, "**The peace of the Lord be with you always.**"

The Rite of Peace is an outward demonstration of what we share with one another **in Christ**. It is not a gesture of hospitality or a matter of "passing on" to the person *our peace*. We are not told: "Welcome one another." "Share your peace, with your neighbor." There is a reason. This rite and the whole Liturgy is about Christ, the Redeemer, our only source of enduring peace and of communion with one another. The peace we pray for and wish for one another is the same peace that Jesus offered to the Apostles on Easter Sunday night when he appeared to them, "Peace be with ---you." (John 20:19)

The revised *Roman Missal*, in par. 82 describes the purpose of the Rite: "The rite of peace follows, by which the Church asks for peace and unity for herself and for the whole human family, and the faithful express some sign of their ecclesial communion and mutual charity for each other before receiving sacramental Communion..."

"... it is appropriate that each person offer the sign of peace only to those nearby and in a dignified manner."

Directions to the priest are found in the *United States Adaptations* of the norms in the *Roman Missal* par. 154.2 "The priest may give the sign of peace to the ministers, but always remains within the sanctuary, so that the celebration not be disturbed. ...At the same time, in accord with the decisions of the Conference of Bishops, all offer one another a sign that expresses peace, communion, and charity. While the sign of peace is being given, one may say, *The peace of the Lord be with you always*, to which the response is *Amen*."

A few moments after we make this gesture, we approach the Banquet where Christ nourishes us with His own Body and Blood in Holy Communion.

WITH REVERENCE FOR CHRIST
WE APPROACH HOLY COMMUNION

The Church teaches that in Holy Communion we receive our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ Who is truly present under the appearance of bread and wine. The greatest reverence must be given to Christ, present in the action of the Liturgy and reserved in the tabernacle.

From the time that Holy Communion has been distributed to the faithful while standing, the communicant was directed to make some sign of reverence before receiving Communion. During these years, the sign was left to individual choice. Now, in an effort to give greater emphasis to our reverence by a single gesture prescribed for all, the Bishops of the United States have acted as a body to direct the faithful throughout the Nation to make **a bow of the head before receiving Communion**. A description of the norm follows:

In the U.S.A:

- "...the communicant bows his or her head before the Sacrament as a gesture of reverence and receives the Body of the Lord from the minister." (This is indication that throughout the United States the bow of the head replaces other reverent gestures by the faithful such as a sign of the cross, a genuflection, kneeling, etc.).
- This "...sign of reverence is also made before receiving the Precious Blood."
- Communion "may be received either on the tongue or in the hand at the discretion of each communicant."
- "The norm for reception of Holy Communion in the dioceses of the United States is standing. Communicants should not be denied Holy Communion because they kneel...."

Throughout the world: "The faithful may not take up the consecrated bread or the sacred chalice themselves, and still less, hand them on to one another."