

## Posture During Mass

**The following chart indicates the normal postures that are to be observed  
by the faithful during the celebration of Mass in the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland**

Profound Bow	The Priest, the Deacon, and the ministers, including the assembly, reverence the altar with a profound bow; <sup>1</sup> <i>however...</i>
	<i>...if the tabernacle with the Most Blessed Sacrament is situated in the sanctuary near the altar, the Priest, the Deacon, and the other ministers, including the assembly, genuflect when they approach the altar before or during the Entrance Chant, but not during the celebration of Mass itself.<sup>2</sup></i>
Stand...	...from the beginning of the Entrance Chant until the end of the Collect <sup>3</sup>
Sign of the Cross	When the Entrance Chant is concluded, with everybody standing, the Celebrant and faithful make the Sign of the Cross <sup>4</sup>
Strike the Breast...	...during the Confiteor (if used), at the words <i>through my fault...through my most grievous fault</i> <sup>5</sup>
Sit...	...during the readings before the Gospel and the Responsorial Psalm <sup>6</sup>
Stand...	...for the Alleluia Chant before the Gospel and while the Gospel is proclaimed <sup>7</sup>
Sign of the Cross	After the Celebrant has said <i>A reading from the holy Gospel...</i> , everyone makes the Sign of the Cross with their thumb on their forehead, mouth, and breast <sup>8</sup>
Sit...	...for the Homily <sup>9</sup>
Stand...	...for the Profession of Faith (Creed) and the Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful) <sup>10</sup>
Profound Bow...	...during the Creed, at the words <i>and by the Holy Spirit . . . and became man</i> <sup>11</sup>
Sit...	...during the Preparation of the Gifts at the Offertory, until after the words “Pray, brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the almighty Father.” <sup>12</sup>
Stand...	...for the words <i>May the Lord accept this sacrifice...</i> until the end of the Holy, Holy, Holy <sup>13</sup>
Kneel...	...from after the Holy, Holy, Holy until the end of the Great Amen (e.g., during the Eucharistic Prayer), <sup>14</sup> unless the church has no kneelers, <sup>15</sup> in which case, the faithful stand, <sup>16</sup> and make a profound bow when the celebrant genuflects <sup>17</sup>
<b>Stand...</b>	<b>...after the Great Amen, and remain standing after the Lamb of God and through the celebrant’s reception of Holy Communion.<sup>18</sup> The faithful remain standing during the distribution<sup>19</sup> and reception<sup>20</sup> of Holy Communion for the singing of the Communion Hymn.<sup>21</sup></b>
Bow of the Head...	...when the Communion minister says to the communicant <i>The Body/Blood of Christ</i> <sup>22</sup>
<i>Sit or Kneel...</i>	<i>...if / when necessary,<sup>23</sup> in pastoral consideration of the needs of individual members of the faithful.</i>
If receiving the Body of Christ...	...in the <b>hand</b> : the communicant replies, <i>Amen</i> , then receives in the hand with one hand atop the other, fingers together, palms slightly cupped, “making a throne for the King” <sup>24</sup> ...on the <b>tongue</b> : the communicant replies, <i>Amen</i> , then receives on the tongue.
If receiving the Blood of Christ...	...the communicant replies, <i>Amen</i> , the minister hands over the chalice, which the communicant raises to his or her mouth. Each communicant drinks a little from the chalice, hands it back to the minister, and then withdraws. <sup>25</sup>
<b>Sit or Kneel...</b>	<b>...during the period of sacred silence...after the distribution of Holy Communion.<sup>26</sup> This period of sacred silence should begin <u>as soon as the distribution of Holy Communion has been completed.</u><sup>27</sup> At this point the faithful may sit or kneel. The faithful should not be required to stand during the purification of vessels, or until the reposition of the Blessed Sacrament.</b>
Stand	From the Prayer after Communion until the end of Mass <sup>28</sup>
Profound Bow	The Priest, the Deacon, and the ministers, including the assembly, reverence the altar with a profound bow; <sup>29</sup> <i>however...</i>
	<i>...if the tabernacle with the Most Blessed Sacrament is situated in the sanctuary near the altar, the Priest, the Deacon, and the other ministers, including the assembly, genuflect when they approach the altar before or during the Entrance Chant, but not during the celebration of Mass itself.<sup>30</sup></i>

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<sup>1</sup> *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* [hereafter, GIRM], 49, 122, 173, 195, 211, 256, 275

<sup>2</sup> GIRM, 274

<sup>3</sup> GIRM, 124

<sup>4</sup> GIRM, 50, 124

<sup>5</sup> *Roman Missal*, “The Order of Mass,” 4

<sup>6</sup> GIRM, 128

<sup>7</sup> GIRM, 131

<sup>8</sup> GIRM, 134

<sup>9</sup> GIRM, 43

<sup>10</sup> GIRM, 137

<sup>11</sup> GIRM, 137, 275b

<sup>12</sup> GIRM, 139, 146

<sup>13</sup> GIRM, 146

<sup>14</sup> GIRM, 43

<sup>15</sup> “The furnishings of sacred buildings have some relation to the customs of each place. For example, ...at Rome in the basilicas in our days there are more often benches which lack kneelers and therefore can accommodate greater numbers. In cases in which it is not possible to kneel, a profound bow and dignified posture will be signs to manifest reverence and adoration at the time of the consecration and communion.” *Notitiae* 14 (1978): 302-303, n. 4.

<sup>16</sup> In churches without kneelers, the faithful are asked to stand for the Eucharistic Prayer. GIRM, 43

<sup>17</sup> “Those who do not kneel should make a profound bow when the [celebrant] genuflects after the Consecration.” GIRM, 43

<sup>18</sup> GIRM, 43

<sup>19</sup> “The appropriate posture of the faithful during the distribution of Holy Communion is standing.” *BCL Newsletter*, July 2003, c.f. GIRM, 43, 86

<sup>20</sup> Standing to receive Holy Communion is the normative posture for the reception of Holy Communion; however, a communicant is never to be denied Holy Communion if they choose to kneel. GIRM, 160

<sup>21</sup> Standing for the singing of the Communion Hymn is the normative posture of the Catholic Church in the United States; however, this posture directive is not to be enforced so rigidly that those who wish to sit or kneel would not feel free to do so. c.f. endnote 23

<sup>22</sup> GIRM, 43, 160

<sup>23</sup> “The prescription of the [GIRM] no. 43, is intended, on the one hand, to ensure within broad limits a certain uniformity of posture within the congregation for the various parts of the celebration of Holy Mass, and on the other, to not regulate posture rigidly in such a way that those who wish to kneel or sit would no longer be free.” Cardinal Francis Arinze, Prefect for the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments [CDWDS], Prot. n. 855/03/L, May 26, 2003, as quoted in the *BCL Newsletter*, vol. XXXIX, July 2003, pg. 133

<sup>24</sup> St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, ~400 A.D. “When you approach [Holy Communion],...make your left hand a throne for your right hand, since the latter is to receive the King.”

<sup>25</sup> GIRM, 286

<sup>26</sup> GIRM, 88, 164. “After Communion, [the faithful] praise God in their hearts and pray to him.” GIRM, 45

<sup>27</sup> GIRM 86: “the singing [of the Communion song] is continued for as long as the Sacrament is being administered to the faithful.” “The period of sacred silence would seem to begin, therefore, once all have received Holy Communion; hence the appropriate posture of the faithful during the distribution of Holy Communion is standing.” *BCL Newsletter*, July 2003, c.f. GIRM, 43

<sup>28</sup> GIRM, 43

<sup>29</sup> GIRM, 90, 169, 186, 251, 272, 275

<sup>30</sup> GIRM, 274