

The meaning of our movements

In an earlier reflection we looked at how our gestures and actions at Mass are themselves meaningful parts of our prayer. Our processions, bows, genuflections, making the sign of the Cross, standing, sitting, kneeling and all the other bodily postures we assume at Mass all mean something as we do them in the course of our celebration of the Eucharist. *Standing* is an active and participatory posture; we sit when we are *attentive* to the proclamation of the scriptures; *kneeling* expresses profound reverence and respect, and so on. One movement in particular I would like to give some extra attention to is *genuflection*, a word that means literally *to bend the knees*. We genuflect by bending both knees, lowering and touching the right knee to the floor {or as close to it as we can get!}. It is a gesture that signifies adoration, and is used only for the reserved Sacrament of the Eucharist. Appropriate times for genuflection in church are upon arriving before Mass has begun, when leaving after Mass has been completed, and any other time one would be in church and pass before the tabernacle where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. Genuflection should not be done at any time during the actual celebration of Eucharist because the reserved Sacrament is not the focus of our attention at that time. When the different ministers come forward during the celebration of Mass (Readers, Ushers when taking up the collection, and Eucharistic Ministers) they should make a profound bow to the altar as a sign of respect to Christ whom the altar represents, rather than genuflect. If anyone of the congregation needs to leave while Mass is being celebrated, they too should bow to the altar when leaving and returning, rather than genuflect.

Please let us know what else about our faith tradition you'd like to find out more about. Contact our Council for Catechesis at tkautza@saintmaryhc.org.