

The New Liturgy of the Revised Roman Missal
Liturgical Minutes No. 13
Liturgical Postures

The liturgical postures of standing, sitting, bowing, kneeling, and prostration are the subject of today's Liturgical Minute. These postures convey the various relationships that we have with God. Some convey reverence, while others convey repentance, submission, supplication, or adoration. For example, for the first century Christian community, standing was the ordinary posture for prayer, denoting reverence for God and a sign of the resurrection of Christ.

Physical gestures and postures assumed during liturgical worship can express outwardly the inner attitudes of the heart and soul. These gestures and postures do not merely "describe" inner attitudes, they actually bring such attitudes "into existence" and manifest the relationship to God that they symbolize.

Today, **standing** continues to be the ordinary posture for prayer. **Sitting** is the posture of rest, of listening, and to reflect on what has been heard. A **simple bowing** of the head is sometimes used for prayer or when receiving a blessing – and always before receiving Holy Communion. **Kneeling** can be an expression of humility, of supplication, or a sign of penance or sorrow. **Genuflection**, a form of kneeling whereby the right knee touches the ground, is an expression of reverence or a way to show adoration. As a sign of reverence and adoration, believers genuflect or make a **profound bow** (being a bow from the waist) when passing close to the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle. A **double genuflection**, that is, kneeling on both knees and bowing the upper portion of the body slightly and then rising again (or if unable, a profound bow), is a sign of adoration made before the Holy Eucharist exposed. **Prostration**, the practice of lying on the ground face downward, a sign of total submission, while practiced often by the early Christians, is now primarily reserved for the rites of ordination.