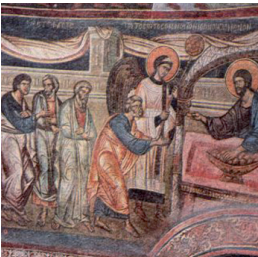


# Gestures at Mass



## The Sign of the Cross

On entering the church, we dip the fingers of our right hand in holy water and make the Sign of the Cross, a sign of accepting our baptism anew. By slowly and thoughtfully, touching our forehead, our heart, our left and right shoulders, we are reminded that we are joined with Christ. This helps prepare us for the celebration of the liturgy which similarly begins with this basic yet powerful prayer, a reminder of Christ's death on the Cross as a means to eternal life for each of us. Prior to the reading of the Gospel, we make three small crosses – on our forehead, on our lips and over our heart – to ask Christ's message be imprinted on our hearts, minds and in our words. At the end of the liturgy, the Priest gives a final blessing and we make the Sign of the Cross to place ourselves under the protection of the Cross, asking Christ to protect and guide us in our daily lives.

## Kneeling and/or genuflecting

Bending the right knee to the floor and rising again (genuflecting) in the direction of the tabernacle before moving into a pew and kneeling in prayer are both very much a part of the Church's tradition. Kneeling has long been connected with homage and adoration as knights knelt down to offer their strength and support to Kings and rulers. This gesture has been carried into Christian culture (mentioned 59 times in the New Testament) as a way of helping us not only to praise our Lord but a way to surrender to his will – mind and body.

## Sitting

On sitting, our first inclination may be to rest – a welcome reprieve from standing or kneeling. Resting in the presence of our Lord enables us to set aside our busy lives to listen to his message with an attentive ear.

## 'Calling down from on high'

Known as the Epiclesis, this gesture is made by the presiding priest over the gifts of bread and wine to invoke the Holy Spirit. Bringing his hands down over the chalice and the host, he enacts the very heart of the Eucharistic celebration: the consecration. Although the priest makes this gesture solely, it signals a time of deepest prayer as we prepare to receive the body of Christ in Holy Communion.

## Walking/Queuing

Whether it is a leisurely stroll through a park or a quick sprint to the shops before they close, walking is very much a part of our daily lives. Similarly, we often queue for buses without too much thought. However, walking and queuing in Church are distinctly different and for these reasons, it is called processing. After dipping our hand in holy water in the stoup and joining ourselves to Christ, we move into the nave of the church - mindful of the fact that we are pilgrims on a journey of faith to meet God our Father in heaven. During the liturgy, we join with our brothers and sisters in Christ to form a procession; to reverently process to the altar to receive Holy Communion.

## The Sign of Peace

The gesture of acknowledging our neighbour with a handshake or a simple nod of the head and the greeting 'Peace be with you' was practiced in the Early Church and reintroduced following the Second Vatican Council. It makes it clear that our faith is not a private matter. Through baptism we are brothers and sisters of each other, the body of Christ. Our faith calls us to see and to respond to the face of Christ in ALL those with whom we share God's creation.

## Standing

Just as the Risen Christ is standing at God's right hand in readiness to welcome each one of us into his heavenly kingdom (2 Peter 1:11), we are asked to stand in readiness to receive his blessing and respond to the Gospel message.