

DEAR DEACON BULLETIN INSERT

January 23, 2022

❖ Dear Deacon Jim,

During masses we change from sitting to standing to kneeling often. What is the meaning/reason behind the different postures?

❖ Response

In the celebration of the Mass, we raise our hearts, minds, and voices to God. As creatures composed of body as well as spirit, we also pray with our bodies. These postures of standing, kneeling, and sitting are not merely ceremonial. Rather, they have profound meaning and enhance our personal participation in the liturgy more attentively. In fact, these actions are the way in which we engage our bodies in the prayer that is the Mass.

Each posture we assume at Mass underlines and reinforces the meaning of the action in which we are taking part at that moment in our worship.

Standing is a sign of respect and honor, so we stand as the celebrant who represents Christ and the other ministers process into and leave the assembly. This posture, from the earliest days of the Church, has been understood as the stance of those who are risen with Christ and seek the things that are above. When we stand for prayer we assume our full stature before God, in humble gratitude for the marvelous thing God has done in creating and redeeming each one of us. We stand for the Gospel, because we acknowledge that it is Christ himself speaking to us when it is proclaimed. The bishops of the United States have chosen standing as the normal posture for the reception of Holy Communion in this country.

Kneeling signified penance in the early Church. The awareness of sin casts us to the ground! Kneeling is identified with penance. In the Middle Ages kneeling came to signify the homage of a vassal to his lord, and more recently this posture has come to signify humble adoration. It is for this reason that the bishops of the United States have chosen kneeling for the assembly during the Eucharistic Prayer, from singing the Holy, Holy, until after singing the Great Amen.

Sitting is the posture of attentive listening and of meditation. So, the congregation sits for the readings before the Gospel and the homily and may also sit for a period of meditation following Communion.

Deacon Jim