# **Mass: Movement, posture and gesture**

*There are a number of gestures and signs used throughout the Mass such as bowing, kneeling, folding one’s hands and, of course, the Sign of the Cross. This is because a physical gesture or posture can help us to focus our mind for what is at hand and upon God’s Word. Movement and gestures also help us to focus our body and soul for prayer and worship. For more details about this see the table below.*

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| Action | When? | Why? |
| GENUFLECTIng | When coming into the church before going into our seat and when we leave the church. | We show respect and reverence to the Blessed Sacrament by bending our right knee to the floor. When we genuflect, we face toward the tabernacle containing the Blessed Sacrament or the altar. We know that the Blessed Sacrament is present in the tabernacle as the Sanctuary Lamp is lit. |
| making the SIGN OF THE CROSS | We make the Sign of the Cross with holy water, which is a sign of our Baptism, when we enter and exit the church. The Sign of the Cross is made many times during the Mass. | The Sign of the Cross is a cross traced with the right hand, touching the forehead, the chest, and then the left and right shoulder. The words In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen are said aloud or silently as the sign is made. |
| SITTING | We sit in the Liturgy of the Word when we listen to the First Reading, Psalm, and Second Reading and during the homily as well as various other parts during the Liturgy the Eucharist. | We sit quietly and respectfully because we are in our ‘Father’s house’ |
| STANDING | There are several times during Mass when we stand including the Introductory Rites at the start of the Mass and when the Gospel is proclaimed. | By standing we acknowledge that Jesus is with us. It is a sign of honour and respect. |
| BOWING | We bow when we go on the sanctuary where the Blessed Sacrament is in the tabernacle, near the altar. The priest also bows at different times during the Mass too. | Bowing is a sign of reverence. We bow deeply from the waist at Mass |
| KNEELING | We usually kneel to pray when we get to our seats before Mass begins. We also kneel during the Eucharistic Prayer and after Communion. | Kneeling is a sign of great respect and reverence. Those who are old or injured are not obliged to kneel. |
| GOSPEL GREETING | When the priest/deacon says, A reading from the Holy Gospel according to (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John), we respond with the words *Glory to you, O Lord*, while making the Sign of the Cross with our thumb on our forehead, lips and chest. | When the priest/deacon reads the first word from the Lectionary (the special book at Mass with the readings) to announce the Gospel, he makes the Sign of the Cross on his head, lips and chest with his thumb. This gesture is a form of prayer for the presence of the Word of God in your mind (forehead), in your words (lips), and in your heart (chest). |
| Responding | There are set responses that we say at different times during the Mass. It is like a conversation we are having with God. The congregation responds together with one voice. | The most common response is we say at Mass is Amen, which means I believe. It is important that when we respond in Mass, we do so clearly and sincerely. |
| RECEIVING COMMUNION | Those who have made their First Holy Communion go to Communion in an orderly line indicating clearly whether they want to receive on the tongue or in the hand. We are offered the sacred Host and the Chalice or else the Host alone. The Host is offered to us with the words *The Body of Christ and we* respond *Amen*. Those who do not wish to receive Holy Communion are welcome to come for a blessing. | We always receive the Host and the Chalice with great reverence and in silence because this is such an important part of the Mass. |
| SINGING | Singing can take place at various times of the Mass including at the beginning and end. As the Psalms were written as songs, we try to sing the Psalm. We also sing the Alleluia at appropriate times of the liturgical year. | Singing is a form of praying and praising God as well as celebrating so it often takes place at Mass. |

Adapted from: <https://www.togetheratonealtar.catholic.edu.au/craft/gestures-and-actions-assembly/>

For more information about the Mass see   
Q & A GUIDELINES FOR CELEBRATING SCHOOL MASSES <https://education.rcdow.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Mass-Guidelines.pdf>