

REVERENCE

Thomas Aquinas tells us: *“We show God reverence, not for his benefit, since creatures can add nothing to the fullness of glory He already has in himself; we do it for our benefit, so as to subject our spirit to him and perfect it. Every creature gains perfection by subjecting itself to higher ones.”*

So what do we mean by reverence? Reverence is a feeling of deep respect, love, awe and esteem shown for someone or something sacred. True reverence flows out of a relationship of loving union with God. Reverence is not so much something that we do, but an attitude.

We show reverence to God during liturgical celebrations in a variety of ways. Here we will touch on some of them. Our various gestures, postures, and processions all contribute to an attitude of reverence. In addition, we show reverence in other ways:

Reverence for the Tabernacle

Directions for reverencing the Tabernacle containing the Blessed Sacrament are clarified in paragraph 274 of the GIRM.

If the Tabernacle is not in the sanctuary proper, no act of reverence is made. If, however, the Tabernacle is in the sanctuary proper, it is reverenced by genuflection. This gesture should not be hurried or careless.

[a] When members of the assembly enter the Church and approach their seat, they genuflect, facing the Tabernacle. It is not a quick curtsy, nor is it a genuflection to the pew. To genuflect properly, the right knee goes down to the floor and rests there for a moment, while facing the Tabernacle.

[b] An act of reverence is also made as the ministers arrive and leave the sanctuary. This act of reverence is also a genuflection.

[c] However, ministers carrying the processional cross, candles, incense, or Book of Gospels bow their heads instead of genuflecting.

Reverence for the altar

When we reverence the altar, which represents Christ, we are reverencing a sacred object. The altar is reverenced in 2 ways:

[a] Bowing: The priest and ministers reverence the altar during the Introductory Rite and the Dismissal Rite by making a profound bow (except for those ministers carrying the processional cross, candles, incense, or Book of Gospels, who bow their heads).

[b] Kissing the Altar: The priest(s) and deacon make an additional act of reverence by kissing the altar during the Introductory Rite and the Dismissal Rite.

Reverence when we receive Holy Communion

In Canada, we will retain the ancient posture of standing for receiving Holy Communion. We come forward in procession and as an additional sign of reverence, we bow our head before receiving the Sacred Body of Christ. We lift our head and as the minister of communion says, *“The Body of Christ”*, we respond with a strong *“Amen”*. We accept the consecrated host in our hands (or on the tongue) and consume it immediately. It is not lawful for the communicant to hold the host in one’s hand and wait to consume it after returning to one’s seat. When receiving the Precious Blood, we respond *“Amen”* again after the minister of communion says: *The Blood of Christ*. We accept the cup from the minister; we do not grab it out of their hands. It is not lawful for the communicant to dip the consecrated host into the Precious Blood before consuming it.

Reverence for the Ambo

The readings, responsorial psalm, and the Easter Proclamation (Exsultet) are proclaimed only from the ambo; it may be used also for the homily and Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful). The dignity of the ambo requires that only a minister of the word should proclaim from it (309).

All other announcements should be made at some other designated place.

Reverence for the Book of Gospels

“The reading of the Gospel constitutes the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. The Liturgy itself teaches the great reverence that is to be shown to this reading by setting it off from the other readings with special marks of honour, by the fact of which minister is appointed to proclaim it and by the blessing or prayer with which he prepares himself; and also by the fact that through their acclamations the faithful acknowledge and confess that Christ is present and is speaking to them and stand as they listen to the reading; and by the mere fact of the marks of reverence that are given to the Book of Gospels” [60].

Reverence through personal attitude and demeanor

We also show reverence through our personal behaviour. We dress appropriately and modestly. We don't chew gum during the Liturgy. We arrive on time and remain until the Mass is ended. These and other behaviours are signs of our personal reverence during liturgical celebrations.

Reverence through silence

Throughout the liturgy, there is a renewed call for silence as a way of showing reverence.

Note:

Gift bearers and lectors should not bow when entering the sanctuary.