

BOWING AND GENUFLECTING IN CHURCH

Bowing profoundly from the waist to the altar is appropriate upon entering and upon leaving our church. We bow to the altar for it is the place where the Body of Christ and the Sacrifice of the Cross is made present under sacramental signs at Mass.

For Mass, all should make a head bow at “conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary” in the Apostles’ Creed during Lent and Easter time, and at “by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man” in the Nicene Creed during other liturgical seasons.

When the large Book of the Gospel is being carried in procession by the Deacon from the altar to the Ambo for proclamation and the people are standing, it is appropriate to make a head bow to the Gospel as it is passing by out of reverence to Christ present in the Word of God.

After the distribution of Holy Communion and while the Ciborium is still on the altar, the Eucharist Ministers (EM’s) bring the bowl to the Lead, and both the Lead and EM bow to the Body of Christ present in the bowl being received by the Lead. When the Lead returns the empty bowl to the EM, the EM takes the empty bowl and places it on the credence table. He or she then returns to his or her pew without the need to make another bow to the altar since you yourself are now the living tabernacle of the Blessed Sacrament within you.

Once EM’s leave from the credence table, they need not bow to the altar at that time before returning to their places in the assembly because they themselves are like a living tabernacle, having just consumed the Body and Blood of Christ.

When the Lead leaves the altar carrying the Ciborium and walks toward the Eucharistic Chapel, the EM’s stop and stand still out of reverence until the Lead passes by the first pew on their way up the Marian Aisle. The EM’s may then return to their seat without the need for further bowing to the altar.

A bow of the head, not a genuflection, is appropriate just before you receive the Body of Christ. “When Holy Communion is offered under both kinds, the communicant bows his or her head to the presence of the Precious Blood, as a sign of reverence, whether or not they are receiving from the cup.” (*Taken from Roman Missal Formational Materials provided by the Secretariat for the Liturgy of the USCCB, copyright 2010.*)

**Genuflecting instead of a bow is most appropriate in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament when it is enshrined in the monstrance during exposition and adoration, and when one is in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle of the Eucharistic Chapel.