

How and why do we pray together as a parish?

Though the Mass is most definitely an intimate encounter between each of us and God, we do not participate in Mass as isolated individuals. The Holy Trinity is, at the same time, 3 persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and only one God. We reflect this mystery of the Trinity at Mass, celebrating as individuals *in community*. This unity of individuals is often referred to in Scripture as “parts of One Body” or “members of one family”. In Mass, though many, we are one.

To show this oneness, the postures and gestures made **during** Mass should be done in unison remembering that our body speaks. Though we may desire to use a body posture of our own choosing, we should keep in mind that in Mass God calls us to act as one body. The postures used in Mass are found in the church document called the General Instruction of the Roman Missal.

Where most postures used during Mass are common to the whole Church, certain postures are open to the direction of the local bishop. When we go to Mass in a different diocese we may notice that they stand or kneel at different times. We should familiarize ourselves with the local customs and make every effort to join in unity with the body of the parish.

During Mass, there are usually 3 body postures: standing, sitting, kneeling. Standing is a sign of respect and reverence before God meaning we are ready to respond to Him "right away, always, and with joy." When we stand, stand erect – remember, our body is speaking.

The posture of sitting signifies attentive listening, readiness to be instructed. We should be sitting, as it were, on the edge of our seats, in great anticipation for what the Lord is about to say to us – remember, our body is speaking.

The posture of kneeling shows humble submission before the majesty of God, penance and a spirit of repentance, adoration and reverence in prayer. When we kneel, kneel up straight – remember, our body is speaking.

To listen carefully to the Sacred Scripture and the Liturgy of the Eucharist requires energy and attention and our posture should reflect that interior attitude of alertness. The more actively we participate in our roles, the more meaningful Mass will become.