

Reverence for the Eucharist

Let us Bow Down and Worship (Psalm 95)

Think of all the gestures we take for granted that have meaning attached to them. A friendly wave across the room, a head tilted in bewilderment, a thumbs-up for a job well done. Other silent gestures remind us of the dignity of another person, be it standing to order in a courtroom to acknowledge the judge, the curtsey or bow before a king or queen, the joined hands and deep bow in the Eastern tradition. If we exhibit these signs of reverence for fellow humans, how much more so should we show signs of reverence for Our Lord, Jesus Christ, in the Eucharist.

When we pass in front of a tabernacle with the reserved Blessed Sacrament, we make a profound sign of reverence. Ordinarily this is a genuflection on one knee or, if physically challenged, a deep bow. We show reverence during the celebration of the Mass by our attentive engagement in the sacrifice being offered and our active participation in it, both internally and externally. We should be in reverent awe as the priest “gathers not only the bread and the wine, but the substance of our lives and joins them to Christ's perfect sacrifice, offering them to the Father.” (USCCB, “The Eucharist,” November 2021) When we come forward to receive the Body and Blood of Christ in the form of bread and/or wine, we should walk with reverence and dignity, signifying the profound nature of what we are about to do, joining Christ’s Body to our own. Approaching the altar with folded hands, we bow our heads before receiving Holy Communion and show deep reverence as we receive. Our reverence for the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ is reflected in our solemn “Amen,” “So be it,” an act of faith in the Divine Presence. It is customary to make the sign of the cross after receiving; let us make more of an effort at a slow and meaningful one rather than a rushed sweep of the hand.

Our reverence for the Eucharist begins even before we head to church. Fasting for one hour before Communion from all solids and liquids, with the exception of water and required medicine, shows our respect and reverence for His true presence in the Eucharist. We also must be in a state of grace (not conscious of having committed any grave sins) when we approach for Holy Communion.

Reverence for the Eucharist should demonstrate our humility of heart and a loving commitment to live the Gospel values in faith in imitation of and in unity with Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord.

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