

Gospel Kneeling to Jesus

**O come, let us adore and bow down and kneel before the Lord Who made us;
for He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.**

Psalm 95[94]:6-7 (literal translation of New Vulgate 1979/86)

KNEELING and BOWING THE KNEE to the Lord Jesus: exhaustive list of N.T. texts

from the RSV which uses *worship* for *adore*
and "bowing the knee" for "bending the knee".

Mat 2:11 — they saw the Child with Mary his mother, and they **fell down and worshiped** him...

Mat 8:2 — and behold, a leper came to him and **knelt** before him, saying, "Lord... you can make me clean."

Mat 9:18 — While he was thus speaking to them, behold, a ruler came in and **knelt** before him, saying, "My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live."

Mat 15:25 — But she came and **knelt** before him, saying, "Lord, help me."

Mat 17:5-6 — This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him, When the disciples heard this, they **fell on their faces**, and were filled with awe.

Mat 17:14 — And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and **kneeling** before him said...

Mat 20:20 — Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to him, with her sons, and **kneeling** before him she asked him for something.

Mat 28:9 — And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Hail!" And they came up and **took hold of his feet and worshiped him**.

Mark 1:40 — And a leper came to him beseeching him, and **kneeling** said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean."

Mark 5:22 — Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and seeing him, he **fell at his feet**...

Mark 7:25 — But immediately a woman, whose little daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and **fell down at his feet**.

Mark 10:17 — And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and **knelt** before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Luke 5:8 — But when Simon Peter saw it, he **fell down at Jesus' knees**, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Luke 8:41 — And there came a man named Jairus, who was a ruler of the synagogue; and **falling at Jesus' feet** he besought him to come to his house,

Luke 17:16 — and he **fell on his face at Jesus' feet**, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan.

Luke 24:5 — and as they were frightened and **bowed their faces to the ground**, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?"

John 11:32 — Then Mary, when she came where Jesus was and saw him, **fell at his feet**, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

Rom 14:11 — for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, **every knee shall bow to me**, and every tongue shall give praise to God."

Eph 3:14 — For this reason I **bow my knee** before the Father...

Phil 2:10 — that at the name of Jesus **every knee should bow**, in heaven and on earth and under the earth...

KNEELING IN PRAYER

- Luke 22:41 — And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and **knelt** down and prayed,
- Acts 7:60 — And he **knelt** down and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this he fell asleep.
Acts 9:40 — But Peter put them all outside and **knelt** down and prayed; then turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise," And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up.
- Act 20:36 — And when he had spoken thus, he **knelt** down and prayed with them all.
- Acts 21:5 — And when our days there were ended, we departed and went on our journey and they all, with wives and children, brought us on our way till we were outside the city; and **kneeling** down on the beach we prayed and bade one another farewell.
- Rom 14: 11 — for it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every **knee shall bow to me**, and every tongue shall give praise to God."

KNEELING IN MOCKERY

- Mat; 27:29 — and plaiting a crown of thorns they put it on his head, and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him they mocked him, saying, "Hail King of the Jews!"
- Mark 15:19—And they struck his head with a reed, and spat upon him, and they **knelt** down in homage to him.

LESS RELEVANT TEXTS

- Mat 18:26 — So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything."
- Rom 11:4 — But what is God's reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."
- Heb 11:21 — By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff.

LESS FELICITOUS for men or angels

- Acts 10:25 — When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshipped him.
- Rev 3:9—Behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and learn that I have loved you.
- Rev 19:10—Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.
- Rev 22:8—I John am he who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me...

THERE seem to be no **N.T. references to anyone making a simple bow** of the head, or even the waist, let alone any "casual nod", to the Lord Jesus.

Please phone/fax/record on 02 4829 0297, or email c/- <fr@cardinalaewman.cona.au>, any missing texts.

GENUFLECTIONS AND BOWS

See *Handouts* n. 47 of 23rd March, 2008, **Kneel, Genuflect, Bow**, On genuflections, the General Instruction to the Roman Missal (GIRM 2002) §274 says:

A genuflection, made by bending the right knee to the ground, signifies adoration, and therefore is reserved for the Most Blessed Sacrament, as well as for the Holy Cross from the solemn adoration during the liturgical celebration on Good Friday until the beginning of the Easter Vigil.

Next, GIRM (2002) §275 explains bowing, thus: A bow signifies reverence and honour shown to the persons themselves or to the signs that represent them. There are two kinds of bows: a bow of the head and a bow of the body

- A bow of the head is made when the three Divine Persons are named together and at the name of Jesus, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the Saint in whose honour Mass is being celebrated.
- A bow of the body, that is to say a profound bow, is made to the altar... in the Creed at the words *Et incarnatus est* (by the power of the Holy Spirit... and became man).

Contrast the 2007 Vatican-approved Australian adaptations of GIRM (2002) § 160:

When approaching to receive Holy Communion, the faithful bow in reverence to the Mystery that they are to receive.

Bishop Jarrett says in *AD2000* for May 2008:

This is understood as... a bow of the body...

In his two preceding paragraphs he says:

An individual sign of reverence when the congregation receives Communion standing has long been directed, but not always applied. For a long time many people have been in the habit of genuflecting... they may continue doing this as their gesture of reverence...

Further, the Undersecretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship in Rome has written to the Convenor of the Society of Eucharistic Adoration in Australia on 15th April, 2008, Prot. n. 411/08/L, reaffirming *Redemptionis Sacramentum* §91 and GIRM (2002) for Australia in its § 160, and he points out that the latter:

...is set forth in the language of "recommendation" and clearly does not permit the inference that to receive Holy Communion while kneeling would constitute an act of disobedience.

CONFLICTING PRINCIPLES

The *Novus Ordo* has unresolved tensions over *where*, *how* and *when* to reverence Christ's presence.

Historical background: Pope Pius XII (International Congress on Pastoral Liturgy at Assisi, 1956) said:

The altar is more important than the tabernacle, because on it is offered the Lord's sacrifice. In the tabernacle, on the other hand, He is present at long as the consecrated species last, yet is not making a permanent sacrificial offering. ...An awareness of their unity is more important than a realization of their difference. It is one and the same Lord Who is immolated on the altar and honoured in the tabernacle, and Who pours out His blessings from the tabernacle. ...A person who is thoroughly convinced of this would avoid many difficulties. He would be wary of exaggerating the significance of one to the detriment of the other. There is... a tendency to... a lessening of esteem for the presence and action of Christ in the tabernacle. The sacrifice of the altar is held sufficient, and the importance of Him Who accomplishes it is reduced. Yet the person of our Lord must hold the central place in worship, for it is His person that unifies the relations of the altar and the tabernacle and gives them their meaning... to separate tabernacle from altar is to separate two things which by their origin and nature remain united.

The first Instruction on VCI's 1963 *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 1964's *Inter (Ecumenici)*, said in §§91, 95:

The main altar should preferably be freestanding, to permit walking around it and celebration facing the people... It is lawful to celebrate Mass facing the people even on an altar where there is a small but becoming tabernacle.

But GIRM §335 seems to contradict the above:

It is more in keeping with the meaning of the sign that the tabernacle in which the Most Holy Eucharist is reserved not be on an altar on which Mass is celebrated. Consequently, it is preferable that the tabernacle be located, according to the judgement of the diocesan Bishop:

- Either in the sanctuary, apart from the altar of celebration, in a form and place more appropriate, not excluding on an old altar no longer used for celebration...
- Or likewise, some chapel suitable for the faithful's private adoration and prayer and organically connected to the church and readily visible to the Christian faithful.

But it weakens people's faith, piety and practice *not to see* genuflections to a tabernacle: i.e. GIRM §274:

If, however, the tabernacle with the Most Blessed Sacrament is present in the sanctuary, the priest, deacon and other ministers genuflect when they approach the altar and when they depart from the sanctuary, **but not during the celebration of Mass itself.**

Otherwise all who pass before the Most Blessed Sacrament genuflect, unless they are moving in procession. Ministers carrying the processional cross or **candles bow their heads instead of genuflecting.**

THE ROOT PROBLEM

New ideas are sometimes slipped in as though they were quotes from earlier ideas such as the 'Presences of Christ in Mass and Baptism in VCIFs 1963 SC §7:

...Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He is present in the Sacrifice of the Mass not only the person of his minister, "the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross" [Trent], but especially in the eucharistic species. By his power he is present in the sacraments so that when anybody baptizes it is really Christ himself who baptizes. He is present in his word since it is he himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church. Lastly, he is present when the Church prays or sings... [Mat 18:20].

A new idea has a chronological ordering of Christ's presences in the Mass, and develops restrictions. It is in 1967's *Eucharisticum Mysterium* §55 (cf. §9):

In the celebration of Mass the principal ways in which Christ is present to his Church are successively revealed. First of all, Christ is present among the faithful gathered in his name; then in his Word, as the Scriptures are read and explained; also in the person of the minister; finally and to a unique way under the Eucharistic Species. Consequently, by reason of the sign, it is more, in keeping with the nature of the sacred celebration that the Eucharistic presence of Christ, which is the fruit of the consecration and should be seen as such, and, as far as possible, should not be on the altar from the very beginning of Mass through the reservation of the Sacred Species in the tabernacle.

Thus in 1964, there was no chronology. By a plausible rearrangement (and omitting the other sacraments), chronology is used to urge ideas whose other vital aspects suffer. On these principles, the priest should not 'come on stage' till the Offertory!

FINAL FACT OF EXPERIENCE SPEAKING

Tabernacles on Mass altars and kneeling at Communion rails do suit *Novus Ordo* Masses.