

## ***Ask Fr. James***

### **Why do we sit, kneel and stand at various times during Mass?**

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) is the Vatican official explanation of the rubrics of the Mass and gives directives on bodily postures and ritual gestures that accords dignity for the celebration of the most Holy Eucharist. The GIRM explains that the celebration of the Mass or the Lord's Supper is so ordered that the sacred ministers and the faithful take part in it, according to the state proper to each and making accommodations and adaptations to enhance the celebration and for active participation.

Mass begins with the entrance procession and we are invited to stand until the collect or opening prayer. The Christian faithful who come together as one in expectation of the Lord's coming are instructed to sing together hymns, Psalms, and spiritual canticles (cf. Colossians 3.16). Singing is the sign of the heart's joy (cf. Acts 2.46). St. Augustine says rightly, "Singing is for one who loves," and there is also an ancient proverb: "Whoever sings well prays twice over."

The people sit during the main part of the Liturgy of the Word; made up of the readings from Sacred Scripture together with the chants occurring between them. When the Sacred Scriptures are read in the Church, God himself speaks to his people. In the celebration of the Mass with the people, the readings are always read from the ambo and the people are to listen attentively and reverently.

However, people are to stand for the reading of the Gospel. It is introduced by the Alleluia chant. According to the GIRM #62; the Alleluia is an acclamation which constitutes a rite by which the gathering of the faithful welcomes and greets the Lord who is about to speak to them in the Gospel. It is sung by everybody, standing, and is led by the choir or a cantor. We stand when the National anthem is being sung or when we pledge allegiance to the flag. Why not for Christ when he appears to speak to us. The Bible, especially, the Gospel is the sacred word of God and Jesus is the Word of God. We stand for the Gospel reading because it is Jesus who speaks to us and Christ, present in his word as proclaimed in the Gospel.

Concerning kneeling, the GIRM #43 says: In the dioceses of Canada, the faithful should kneel at the Consecration, except when prevented on occasion by ill health, or for reasons of lack of space, of the large number of people present, or for another reasonable cause. (It is important to remember that people who came to Christ knelt to make their requests: See; Matthew 8:2; 9:18; 15:25; 17:14; 18:26; 20:20; Mark 10:17). The GIRM #45 also says Sacred silence also, is part of the celebration and is to be observed at the designated times. It advises that even before the celebration itself, it is a praiseworthy practice for silence to be observed in the church, in the sacristy, in the vesting room, and in adjacent areas, so that all may dispose themselves to carry out the sacred celebration in a devout and fitting manner.