

Kneeling

Many people have problems with their knees or backs, so it can be difficult or painful to get up and down into a kneeling position. Communication with God does not require a certain physical position, but postures do give expression to the attitudes of our hearts. Kneeling is the traditional posture for requesting favours from a king or paying homage, and so it became the traditional posture for prayers of repentance or supplication. In western Christianity, kneeling came to mean simple humility and submission.

In the Hebrew of the Old Testament, the verb *barak*, “to kneel”, is related to the word *berek*, “knee”. The Hebrews regarded the knees as a symbol of strength, to bend the knee is, therefore, to bend our strength before the living God, an acknowledgment of the fact that all that we are we receive from Him.

It is precisely this humility, which comes from love, that is the truly divine reality and allows us to say that the “name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Phil 2:5-10).

God is pleased and hears our prayers no matter how we pray. The important thing is that we come to Him in humbleness with a sincere heart. Prayer and Adoration are two of those fundamental acts that affect the whole of our being. It is sometimes said that we pray with the whole of our bodies.

Jesus and Kneeling

We notice that in garden of Gethsemane while Our Lord was praying He was on his knees (Luke 22:41). ‘Jesus withdrew from them, about a stone’s throw away and knelt down and prayed, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, let your will be done, not mine.’ When he rose from prayer he went to the disciples and found them sleeping for sheer grief. ‘Why are you asleep?’ he said to them. ‘Get up and pray not to be put to the test.’

Another example is when Peter is trying to walk on the water on the lake. ‘Lord save me!’ he cried. Jesus put out his hand at once and held him. ‘Man, of little faith,’ he said, ‘why did you doubt?’ and as he got into the boat the wind dropped. The men in the boat bowed down before him and said, ‘Truly you are the Son of God.’

Finally, in the story of the man born blind who replies to Jesus’ question about his identity ‘Sir’ he said, ‘tell me who he is so that I may believe in him.’ Jesus said, you are looking at him; he is speaking to you.’ The man said, ‘Lord, I believe,’ and worshipped him.’ (John 10 36 -38) Now the eyes of the heart, as well as of the body, are opened.

Acknowledgements

Time before the Blessed Sacrament is a series of leaflets produced by the Spirituality Committee in preparation for *Adoremus*. It is intended for individual reflection as part of a time of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament or Exposition. It could also be used with small groups.

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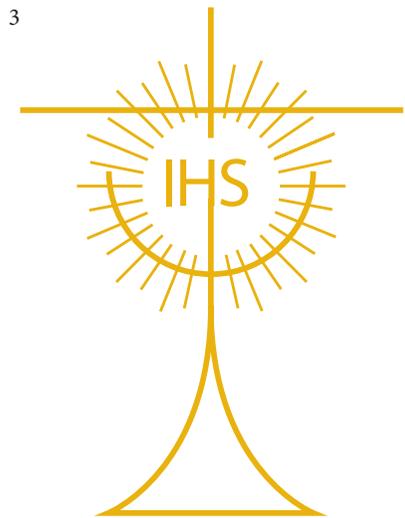
Time before the Blessed Sacrament

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Let us kneel before the Lord our maker.

Ps 94 (95):6

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Looking at Scripture

The Old Testament saints also prayed upon their knees as we read about Daniel at Daniel 6:6–10. Ezra also made his great public confessional prayer on his knees as we notice in Ezra 9:5. King Solomon also offered his temple dedication prayer while on his knees 2 Chronicles 6:13. In the Old Testament, kneeling is seen as an expression of worship.

St Peter knelt by the side of the dead body of Tabitha and prayed (Acts 9:40). St Paul often knelt down and prayed:

I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:14–21



Reflection

What is my favourite posture in prayer?

Have I tried any other posture - regularly?

Which posture is the most comfortable for me? Which most uncomfortable?

What would be the natural way to pray in adoration? Why?

In what occasions or situations might you find it more 'suitable' to kneel (or bow down)?

Prayer

Take, Lord all my liberty.

Receive my memory, my understanding
and my whole will.

Whatever I have and possess,
you have given to me;

to you I restore it wholly,

and to your will utterly surrender it
for my direction.

Give me the love of you only,
with your grace,

and I am rich enough;

nor do I ask anything else besides.

St Ignatius Loyola (1491 -1556)