



Invest time each week to expand your vocabulary and deepen your faith.

08 September 2024

## WORD OF THE WEEK

### Genuflection \gen-yə-"flek-shən\

From Latin *genu* “knee” and *flectere* “to bend,” a gesture of reverence and humility made by lowering on one knee. Often performed when entering or leaving a sacred space. For Catholics, bending the right knee acknowledges the presence of God, particularly when the Blessed Sacrament is present.

**Pronunciation:** <https://tinyurl.com/Take5-Genuflection>

### CONTEXT

Every act of reverence, every **genuflection** that you make before the Blessed Sacrament is important because it is an act of faith in Christ, and act of love for Christ.

—Pope John Paul II

**Genuflection:** By such posture of the body we show forth our humbleness of heart.

—Alcuin, *eighth-century theologian*

### WHY IT MATTERS

Humility is a virtue seldom practiced in a culture that celebrates those who celebrate themselves. With self-aggrandizement becoming commonplace, **genuflection** reminds us that one mightier than us is ever-present. In the act of bending a knee, we acknowledge that we are not God but rather loving servants to God.

From the General Instruction of the Roman Missal: When the prayer for Communion is concluded, the priest **genuflects**, takes a host consecrated at the same Mass, and, holding it slightly raised above the paten or above the chalice, facing the people, says, *Ecce Agnus Dei* (Behold the Lamb of God) and together with the people he adds, Lord, I am not worthy (157).

### RELATED WORDS

Humility | Reverence | Homage | Bow | Prostration

## QUESTION OF THE WEEK

### Why do Catholics bless themselves and genuflect?

Blessing yourself—that is, making the Sign of the Cross is a formal ritual gesture of the church and is the way both public and private prayer begins. It marks you as a Christian and serves as a reminder of the three “persons” in one God. The full Sign of the Cross includes touching the forehead, heart, and both shoulders, signifying acceptance of the demands of discipleship over our thoughts, desires, and deeds.

**Genuflection**, particularly on the right knee, is a sign of reverence made in a Catholic church or oratory acknowledging the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It is a posture of humility, service, and love. It may be directed toward the Table of the Lord (the altar) before Mass. Otherwise, **genuflection** acknowledges the tabernacle, where the Real Presence is reserved in consecrated hosts. These rituals are reminders that we’re incarnate beings who believe in the Word made flesh.

—Alice Camille, from *Questions Catholics Ask* <http://tinyurl.com/QCA-genuflection>

## REFLECTION OF THE WEEK

FEAST OF THE EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS  
(SEPTEMBER 14)

### How the cross became holy

Christians are an odd lot. We take what was an object of torture and murder—the cross of Christ—and elevate it to a holy state. Just as Christ redeemed us through his death, the cross itself is redeemed through Jesus’ saving act. We now place crosses and crucifixes around our necks, pin them to our lapels, and hang them in our homes and churches. The reminder of Jesus’ painful death gives us comfort in our suffering and points to the promise of resurrection.

READINGS: Numbers 21:4b-9; Philippians 2:6-11; John 3:13-17 (638 <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/091424.cfm>). “*At the name of Jesus every knee should bend.*”

### FAITH IN ACTION

The cross is the most universal and powerful symbol of Christianity. Draw on it regularly to give you the strength to find God in all things.