Our Hands in Prayer



Prayer is communication with God, and body poses or hand gestures can lend expressiveness to the conversation. In private prayer, they are optional, but in community prayers as in Mass, they become an integral part of the rite.

The joining of the hands is a beautiful and most eloquent gesture of supplication. Most commonly, we “fold” our hands during prayer. This term actually refers to two separate positions which are used fairly interchangeably.



The position that interlaces the fingers suggests a more introspective posture, and possibly a more fervent frame of mind.

When the palms are together and the fingers are straight, it suggests purity and evokes an act of homage.



Rubrics offer a definite and clear description: "Junctis manibus ante pectus, extensis et junctis pariter digitis, et pollice dextro super sinistrum posito in modum crucis" (*Ritus* cel., III.): *Hands joined at the chest extended and joined hands with fingers and thumb of the right hand over the left in the form of a cross.*

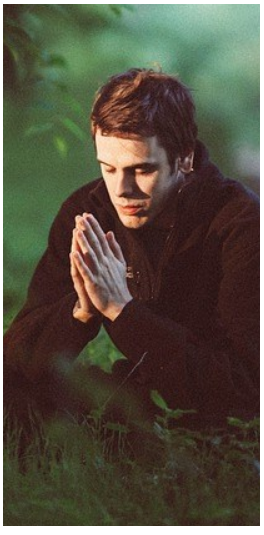
This form of hand posture is particularly used when walking up to, or away from, Communion. The mere fact of thus folding one's hands is in itself a help and incentive to earnest prayer, for by common consent folded hands are the symbol of a mind united to God. One Pope explained that this joining of the hands is an expression of humble submission to the will of God.

Historical Perspective

In the Jewish tradition, there is evidence that some prayed with hands folded well before Christianity and some historians believe that early Christians adapted this custom from their Jewish heritage.

But another common belief is that the hands-folded posture was derived from a Roman practice submission/loyalty.





Sources:

https://stisidoreparish.org/blog/2016/08/04/with-folded-hands-an-introduction-to-prayer-positions/

https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=6122

https://aleteia.org/2017/10/12/why-do-we-fold-our-hands-during-prayer/