

The Genuflection

"A genuflection, made by bending the right knee to the ground, signifies adoration, and therefore it is reserved for the Most Blessed Sacrament." (GIRM: General Instruction of the Roman Missal). This is very important as the genuflection is a gesture ultimately directed towards God, truly present in the Holy Eucharist (in the tabernacle or in Exposition). We do not genuflect to people or material things, but to God alone.

When we enter a Catholic church and before we sit down, we genuflect not toward the pew but *toward the tabernacle*. If the Lord is within the tabernacle there will be a red candle that is lit in the sanctuary (generally, a white candle inside red glass). It is appropriate to make the Sign of the Cross at the moment of genuflection.

The GIRM also explains, in most cases "all who pass before the Most Blessed Sacrament genuflect." There are a few exceptions, but those relate to those who are performing some type of function at Mass. So, this is also true when walking from one side of the church to the other.

Another custom, though not universal in practice, is to genuflect on two knees when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed on the altar in a gold monstrance for public adoration. This is a tradition many are familiar with, but it is optional. It simply recognizes that Jesus is no longer behind a door but is before everyone in a more visible way

When the Blessed Sacrament has been removed to the altar of repose on Good Friday, we do not genuflect before the empty tabernacle.

There are a few other special occasions when we genuflect. For example, before the Holy Cross from the solemn adoration during the liturgical celebration on Good Friday until the beginning of the Easter Vigil. (During this solemn time of the year the cross receives special attention, and the genuflection gives honor to the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross.)

Another time is on the feast of the Annunciation and Christmas during the recitation of the Creed at the words "and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man." This is physical gesture is meant to remind the faithful of the reality of the Incarnation and how Jesus descended into the world to become one of us.

The priest celebrant makes three genuflections during Mass: after the showing of the host, after the showing of the chalice, and before Communion.

If, however, the tabernacle with the Most Blessed Sacrament present in the sanctuary, the priest, the deacon, and the other ministers genuflect when they approach the altar and when they depart from it, but not during the celebration of Mass itself. Otherwise all who pass before the Most Blessed Sacrament genuflect, unless they are moving in procession.

Sources: https://fatima.org/news-views/catholic-apologetics-29/ https://aleteia.org/2018/04/24/when-should-catholics-genuflect-in-a-church/
https://catholicsentinel.org/MobileContent/Faith-Spirituality/Living-Faith/Article/Genuflect-or-bow-When-why-and-how/4/29/30644