

24 March 2024

WORD OF THE WEEK

Prostration \pră-'strā-shən\

Lying face down in a ritual expressing humility, reverence, and submission. Used in the liturgy of ordination, it is also the posture assumed during the entrance ritual on Good Friday when priests and ministers proceed in silence and then reverence the altar before all assembled with a full **prostration**.

Pronunciation: <https://tinyurl.com/Take5-prostration>

CONTEXT

Prostration can carry the symbolism of death—the death to self that comes before the candidate's rebirth into priestly service. —*Beafriar.org website*

[The Magi] saw the child with Mary his mother. They **prostrated** themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts.
—*Matthew 2:11*

In Hebrew the root of the word for “dismayed” can also mean “**prostrate**.” That’s what dismay and fear do. They take the legs from under us.
—*Saint Mary’s College of Oscott Seminary*

WHY IT MATTERS

Postures are powerful. We say much without saying a word. Genuflection and kneeling demonstrate respect. The Asian kowtow—kneeling while touching forehead to the ground—is a deeper display of reverence. The rare full **prostration** symbolizes total submission to God alone. The ultimate **prostration** of Jesus on the cross brings about our salvation.

From the *Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts*: This act of **prostration** [on Good Friday], signifies both the abasement of “earthly man” and also the grief and sorrow of the Church.

RELATED WORDS

Reverence | Humility | Kneel | Bow | Genuflect

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

What is humility?

Humility is just about the exact opposite of everything you see in the world nowadays! To discover the essentials of humility, you have to experiment with self-emptying. Humility recognizes that everything comes from God and belongs to God. Therefore, to God alone go all praise, honor, and glory. When you begin with God and not with yourself, your perspective on reality does a dramatic shift. God's will comes first. “Not my will, but yours be done,” as Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane.

When you choose the perspective of a humble heart, you become aware that your proper orientation as creatures should be one of obedience—that is, attentive listening—to God's call. It's precisely the attitude of obedience that led to the salvation of the world, as Saint Paul tells us: “[Jesus] humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.” Paul explains that humility means putting other people ahead of yourself, thinking of their needs rather than yours. That is so countercultural, jaws will drop whenever you attempt it.

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

REFLECTION OF THE WEEK

FRIDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION (GOOD FRIDAY) (MARCH 29)

The path of redemption

It is easy to look around and conclude that one of the things human beings do best is inflict suffering on one another. In ways big and small, people look to their own interests at the expense of others. Yet Christ, in obedient love, gathers up all suffering in his Passion and death, and offers us redemption through his ultimate sacrifice and Resurrection.

READINGS: Isaiah 52:13–53:12; Hebrews 4:14–16, 5:7–9; John 18:1–19:42 (40 <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/032924.cfm>). “*Christ became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*”

FAITH IN ACTION

You can participate in Christ's redeeming sacrifice by abandoning yourself to God.