

Postures of Prayer

The Orans Position: In this position, a person is standing with their hands raised. Orans is a Latin word for praying. You have probably seen clergy use it when they are blessing the elements during the consecration. Traditionally, this position is used for thanksgiving, praise and general blessing. It is particularly popular in the Eastern Church and the Jewish tradition. The Scripture to reference is Timothy 2:8.

Standing with hands clasped at the waist: This position derives from the way prisoners stood before a conqueror. Hands are as if shackled and eyes are closed or looking down. This posture is for prayers of petition or forgiveness. The Scripture reference is Luke 18:10-13.

Kneeling: Just as one would kneel before a king to ask for favors, kneeling is the posture used for prayers or repentance and supplication. The Council of Nicea on 325 AD forbade kneeling on Sundays because it wasn't appropriate for a celebration. Kneeling has come to mean humility and is a popular prayer posture in the western church. The Scripture reference is Matthew 18:26.

Laying on the ground: This was the traditional posture for great favors or great penance. It is still used in Eastern churches, where there is room because they have no pews. I use it on Good Friday. The Scripture reference is Matthew 26:38-39.

Sitting, usually with hands clasped and head down: This was not a popular position until after the invention of pews in the Middle Ages. David sat to pray in Samuel 7:18.

Adapted from Rev. Ken Collins' Website:
www.kencollins.com