

The Lord's Prayer During Mass: Should We Hold Hands? Or Raise Them in the Air?



These practices are not explicitly prohibited in the General Instruction to the Roman Missal (GIRM), but actually find their roots within the Christian Protestant tradition.

The practice of holding hands while praying the Our Father comes from the Protestant sect faith practice. A reason is that Protestants do not believe in or engage within the liturgical practice of having the enduring Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist; that is to say, Jesus is (as you will) transitory for them during Communion. Therefore, they turn to the gesture of holding hands as a moment of communion in community prayer. This would also explain why there are no tabernacles within Protestant houses of worship.

During the Mass, we have two important moments: the Consecration and Communion. There – during the Mass – is where we find our unity; that is where we join ourselves to Christ and in Christ, through the common priesthood of the faithful. For some, holding hands can be a distraction. We are called to respect them and understand that the practice of holding hands is a personal, not communal or universally recognized or accepted liturgical act. Again, there is **nothing** in the GIRM that indicates that we should hold hands.

Equally, we are called to remember that within the Catholic Church (understanding that the word *catholic* means *universal*) during the Liturgy of the Mass, every liturgical norm or gesture is universal—in other words, it is found in Catholic Churches world-wide.

This is why there are particular moments during the Mass when we kneel, when we stand, when we sit, when we all reply: Amen, etc. – and nowhere in the norms does it say that we are required to hold hands when we pray the Our Father.

Therefore, we *should* avoid this practice during the celebration of Mass. However, if someone wants to do it, let them do it with someone they know very well, without forcing anyone to do it, without making anyone uncomfortable and without trying to convert this practice into a universally accepted liturgical norm for everyone. Because it's not.

With almost year-round cold and flu seasons, we have to remember that not everyone wants to hold the hand of the person next to them, and trying to impose it on them creates moments of unnecessary discomfort to the detriment of communal prayer, piety and recollection.

(Community prayer outside of Mass is a totally different question; when praying outside of Mass, there is no liturgical reason why not to hold someone's hand, since it can be a very moving and symbolic gesture (for example: proffering the blessing at the dinner table.))



An additional learned habit or practice that is seen quite often when praying the Lord's Prayer is that people in the assembly raise or elevate their hands to imitate what the priest does (commonly referred to in Latin as assuming the *Orans* posture). (A picture of a priest in the *Orans* position can be seen above.) We see priests assume the *Orans* posture (i.e., hands extended out from the side) a few times during liturgies. It is a liturgical posture that indicates that he is praying on our behalf, but not in the way that a spouse, friend or family member prays for another person. The priest is praying on our behalf *in persona Christi capitis* (a Latin phrase meaning "in the person of Christ"). This is why established liturgical norms do not permit deacons to assume the *Orans* posture (in or out of the sanctuary), and members of the gathered lay assembly shouldn't either.

Overall, during Mass, the lay assembled need not make gestures that are reserved for the priest, just as they should not say the words or prayers reserved for the priest (such as the Eucharistic or Consecratory Prayers). These are clear examples of a lay member of the assembled faithful publicly confusing their share or role (by virtue of their baptism into the Body of Christ) in the common priesthood, with the ministerial priesthood (which is strictly reserved to the ordained). The priest is present to lead the liturgy and to intercede for the entire gathered assembly.

(SR: <https://aleteia.org/2015/07/05/the-lords-prayer-during-mass-should-we-hold-hands-or-raise-them-in-the-air/>)