

Prostration in Orthodox Christian Worship

(Mathews Barnabas Metropolitan)

Prostration in Christian worship is to express our humility, repentance and dedication before God. In the kauma, in worship we say:

“Holy art Thou O God

Holy art Thou Almighty

Holy art Thou Immortal

Crucified for us,

Have mercy upon us”.

Saying this we kneel down, touch the ground with the hands and forehead. Then we make the sign of the cross on ourselves. In the Sedra in the great lent, we make the prostration again and again, meditating on the prayers. This prostration is the most heart touching action in worship.

We prostrate to show the highest respect and honor. King Nebuchadnezzar prostrated before Daniel. (Daniel 2:46). The shepherds prostrated before infant Jesus (St. Matt. 2:11). The leper prostrated before Jesus Christ (St. Luke. 5:12).

In heaven also, we find the prostration of angels offering glory to God. “And all the angels round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God saying “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen.” (Rev. 7:11, 12)

In the Holy Qurbana (Holy Eucharist) after saying “Crucified for us, have mercy upon us”, we bow down our heads and make the sign of the cross on ourselves. This is a short form of prostration.

On Sundays and the fifty days between Easter and Pentecost, we don't make the full prostration. We bow down our heads. The reason for this is that these are the days of the joy of resurrection.