



Relationship with GOD

More than Just SUNDAY

A very important Sign

With the upcoming 150th anniversary of the Diocese of La Crosse, it is interesting to ponder the many things we have in common with the faithful who came before us. Of all the various aspects of our Catholic Faith that have been handed down to us, we can turn to a very important Sign for all, both past and present, that of making the Sign of the Cross. Day in and day out, we always begin and end our time of prayer with the Sign of the Cross. And this is the very same Sign that was used by our ancestors.

To write this bulletin insert, I read three paragraphs from the Catechism and I found it most helpful to reflect on the meaning behind the words and the gesture. The definition for the Sign of the Cross in the Catechism states: "A sign in the form of a cross made by the Christian as a prayer honoring the Blessed Trinity, 'in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.'" We see these very words spoken by Jesus to the Apostles, as they and all those who came after them, were to "go and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them **in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**" (Matthew 28:19)

It is essential to remember that the Sign of the Cross is a prayer. We begin with the words, "In the name..., " not in the names. This reminds us that God is one. Yes, there are three Persons and yet one God. And, each time that we make the Sign of the Cross we are reminded that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and, in this prayer we give praise to the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. Therefore, we want to pray the Sign of the Cross reverently and with our heart, being aware that we are addressing the Person of the Father, the Person of the Son – Jesus – and the Person of the Holy Spirit. In order for prayer to be internalized, we need to be aware of the Person(s) to whom we are speaking. To this point, if we become mindful that we made the gesture

with our hand but our mind was focused on other things while we simply rattled words, we could make the Sign of the Cross over again.

It is noteworthy that as we sign ourselves, the gesture we are making is a Cross. This represents the Cross on which Jesus died for our sins. Therefore, each time we make that Cross on ourselves, let us become more aware how much God loves us.

Another significant point about this gesture is related to our baptism. The priest traced the Sign of the Cross on our forehead and claimed us for Christ our Savior. This means that we belong to Jesus. Through this Sign, we enter into a two-way relationship with Our Lord as we respond by conforming our lives to His through cooperating with His grace. Further, we become a co-heir with Jesus as Son of the Father. What an inheritance!

When we enter a Church and make the Sign of the Cross after dipping our fingers into the Holy Water, we are reminded that we have been baptized into Christ; that we were washed clean of original sin. In other words, we died with Christ to selfishness and sin and rose to new life with Him. In everyday life, we will still face temptations and difficulties, but we can make the Sign of the Cross in order to be strengthened.

There is so much to this Sign. To hand on the Catholic Faith as our ancestors have done, let us pray with our children at home in the morning, at mealtime and at bedtime, and especially about important decisions, beginning prayer with the Sign of the Cross. We need to teach our future generations the meaning of this most important Sign.

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