

KINDERGARTEN: *The Sign of the Cross*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Praying and focusing on the *Sign of the Cross* and the related prayer *Glory Be* throughout the entire year will help the children begin to know and adore the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The following resources are meant to foster this process. Please consider implementing frequently one aspect from the resources below, to take the children further in their understanding of the *Sign of the Cross*.

God's love for us

The Father sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the Cross for each one of us so that our sins could be forgiven and we could become adopted children of God. Making the *Sign of the Cross* on ourselves and praying in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit will remind us of God's incredible love for each one of us.



The Blessed Trinity blessing the world, with Biblical images of the Father portrayed as a grandfather and the Holy Spirit as a dove.

Why do we want to pray the *Sign of the Cross* every day?

- 1) To learn how to pray the *Sign of the Cross* reverently, being aware that we are addressing the Person of the Father, the Person of the Son, Jesus, and the Person of the Holy Spirit.
- 2) To recognize the gesture we are making is a Cross, because Jesus died on the Cross for our sins.
- 3) To become aware how much God loves us and how close He is.
- 4) To begin to know that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Meaning of the Words and the Gestures

- As Catholics, we always begin and end our prayer with the *Sign of the Cross*. When we make the *Sign of the Cross*, we are telling God we believe in Him. We are offering our prayers to Him.
- The Sign of the Cross is a prayer – not just an introduction. Each time that we make the *Sign of the Cross* and pray the words we give praise to the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity.
- **In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit** We are praying in the *name* of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. “Christians are baptized in the *name* of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: not in their *names*, for there is only one God, the almighty Father, his only Son and the Holy Spirit: the Most Holy Trinity.” (CCC 233) In the words of this prayer of the *Sign of the Cross*, we are calling upon the power of the name of God. The words “In the name of” are synonymous with “in the Person of”. We are placing ourselves under the power and authority of the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is essential to know that the prayer, the *Sign of the Cross*, is not complete when leaving out the words “In the name of.”
- **Amen.** The word Amen at the end of the prayer means, “So be it.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Hereafter CCC, paragraph 2856) This signifies that we believe the words that we are praying.

- The *Sign of the Cross* expresses two chief mysteries of our Faith:
 - 1) God is a Trinity of Persons – three Persons, One God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
 - 2) And Jesus died on the Cross for us.

Learning the Principles

- The *Sign of the Cross* is a sign in the form of a cross made by a Christian as a prayer honoring the Blessed Trinity, “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Glossary of the Catechism, p. 899)
- When we pray by making the *Sign of the Cross*, we acknowledge that Jesus is God, and it gives us grace, which makes us happy.
- Each time we pray the *Sign of the Cross*, we remind ourselves of God's love for us, of the sacrifice Jesus made to give us eternal life in Heaven, and of the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. This *Sign* marks us as Christians and is a visible expression of our belief and hope in God. Therefore the *Sign of the Cross* is very important and cannot become routine.
- We can “sign” ourselves at any time as “the *Sign of the Cross* strengthens us in temptations and difficulties.” (CCC 2157)
- We make the *Sign of the Cross* to show God we believe in Him as the Blessed Trinity.
- When we pray the *Sign of the Cross*, we are professing a very short version of the Apostles’ Creed. We are professing our belief in the Father, and in the Son and in the Holy Spirit, while acknowledging their Presence and coming into their Presence. In praying the *Sign of the Cross*, we are honoring the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity.
- The *Sign of the Cross*, on the threshold of the celebration of the Sacrament of Baptism, marks with the imprint of Christ on the one who is going to belong to Him and signifies the grace of the redemption Christ won for us by the cross. (CCC 1235)



- The Christian begins his day, his prayers, and his activities with the *Sign of the Cross*: “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” The baptized person dedicates the day to the glory of God and calls on the Savior's grace which lets him act in the Spirit as a child of the Father.
- “The *Sign of the Cross* makes kings of all those reborn in Christ” through the waters of Baptism (CCC 786). Christ is a King, who served us to the point of giving His life for us. When we were baptized, and the *Sign of the Cross* was made on our foreheads, we were spiritually remade into the likeness of Christ and His kingship. To be a king means to serve others with complete self-giving love. Therefore, we are to be kings under the *Sign of His Cross*, who serve others, especially those in most need.
- Praying the *Sign of the Cross* is a powerful sacramental. When we make this Sign and pray the words, we are declaring that we belong to Christ through the Sacrament of Baptism and that we desire to obey Him. “Sacramentals are sacred signs which bear a certain resemblance to the Sacraments, and by means of which spiritual effects are signified and obtained through the prayers of the Church.” (Glossary of the *Catechism*, page 898)

- Prayer is a vital necessity. Prayer and Christian life are inseparable. (CCC 2744-2745) In other words, when we pray with our heart, we will come to know the Persons of our Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit personally and deeply. As our friendship with Jesus grows, we recognize more and more how much He loves us and how much we love Him. From this love, received and given, we respond from a natural desire to be one with Jesus in all things, and live our lives in a way that is reflective of His own. This brings much peace and joy to ourselves and those around us.
- In Sacred Art, our Heavenly Father is portrayed as a grandfather. The Father is not a grandfather. He is outside of time and space. He is a Person; pure spirit, without a body. The Holy Spirit is portrayed in Sacred Art by Biblical symbols such as the dove. Likewise, the Holy Spirit is a Person, pure spirit, without a body.

Activities for Learning the Gesture and Words

- Begin by teaching the gesture. Show the children a Crucifix. Explain the meaning of a gesture by giving an example such as putting your finger to your mouth, to be quiet; or pointing in a direction to show a person the way. Show them other gestures and ask what they mean, such as motioning with a finger - to come here, or a wave – to say goodbye. A gesture is a movement that has meaning.

Make the *Sign of the Cross* and then point to the points of the Crucifix. What are we saying when we make this gesture? Whose sign is it? It is Jesus' sign and His sign is our sign too! This sign means that Jesus is very close to us and that He loves us. What a gift! We can use Jesus' sign as our sign. We can make this gesture whenever we want to remember that Jesus is very close to us.



- We can then add the words. We make the *Sign of the Cross* by:
 1. touching our forehead and praying “in the name of the Father”,
 2. then touching our chest (near our heart) and praying “and of the Son”,
 3. then touching our left and right shoulders and praying “and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

The teacher needs to have his/her back to the class so as to properly orient the children in the correct movements. Show them each movement separately, first finding the right hand and pointing to the right; pointing to an object in that direction. Then practice up, down, across and back. When all say the prayer together, the teacher may stand next to the class, facing the same direction and exaggerate the movements, slowly, so they can see what the teacher is doing.
- Always begin and end prayer with the *Sign of the Cross*.
- Use pictures that depict the gestures and then allow the children to color the pictures.
- Echo prayer – have students repeat after you.
- Explain each phrase for better understanding.
- Cut out a small picture of each of the gestures of the *Sign of the Cross* and then allow the students to paste them together in the right order to learn the hand movements.

- Put a simple puzzle together, in the shape of a Cross, with the words of the Prayer.
- Using the numbers 1 through 12, place numbers in order in the 12 corners of a Cross. Have the children draw a line to each number, as well as making the connection between numbers 12 and 1. The visual experience of making a Cross by connection the numbers will excite them.
- Explain how we call upon God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in prayer.
- Teach the children how to pray with their heart; not just rattling words. “Prayer is internalized to the extent that we become aware of Him ‘to whom we speak.’” In the case of the *Sign of the Cross*, we are speaking with the Persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. (CCC 2700)
- Encourage parents to pray with their children at home both at mealtime and bedtime, beginning prayer with the *Sign of the Cross*. Place the one-page prayer card into a plastic sleeve and tie a small loop of yarn to the top loop. Parents may place the prayer card on the child’s bedroom door knob (so it won’t be misplaced). Prayer commitments at the beginning of the academic year, and during Advent and Lent are especially welcomed. A gift, such as a medal and chain or a small statue could be given for an incentive to be faithful each day during a period such as Advent to develop a daily habit of prayer.

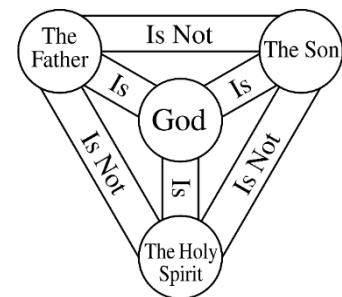
Spiritual Comprehension – do they understand?

- Ask questions to ensure that children know the words of the prayer, understand the meaning of the words and the gestures.
- **This one prayer is the prayer the girls and boys should know by heart and with good understanding before they advance to the next grade level. Therefore, it should be prayed at every opportunity.** During the year, please continue to teach the other prayers as listed in the Diocesan Religion Curriculum for Kindergarten that are to be introduced at this age level.



Encountering the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in Prayer

- After children have become very familiar with this prayer, pray the *Sign of the Cross* aloud and have students listen, preferably with their eyes closed. Have them take notice of a word or phrase that stood out for them. Allow some time of silence for the students to think about why the word or phrase stood out for them. As a further progression, provide silence so that girls and boys may have a “heart-to-heart” conversation with Jesus or our Heavenly Father, which takes prayer to the next level of a deep personal encounter.
- We want to pray this prayer with great reverence and love for our Heavenly Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit which will lead to a deeper friendship with and adoration of each Person of the Blessed Trinity.



Scriptural Foundation

- Jesus said, “Full authority has been given to Me both in Heaven and on earth; go, therefore and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world.” (Matthew 28: 18-20)