

Going Deeper in Prayer:

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* throughout the entire year will help you 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 reading over one part of the resources on the following pages, one time a week for example, to take you further in your understanding of the *Sign of the Cross*.

God's love for us

The Father sent His Son, Jesus, to die on the Cross for you so that your sins could be forgiven and you could become an adopted child of God. Making the *Sign of the Cross* on yourself and praying in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit will remind you of God's incredible love for you and each person.



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

- 1) To pray the *Sign of the Cross* more reverently, being aware that you 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 you are making is a Cross, because Jesus died on the Cross for your sins.
- 3) To become more and more aware how much God loves you
- 4) To always keep in mind 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, and 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 very important to know that the prayer, the *Sign of the Cross*, is not complete when leaving out the words “In the name.”

- **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.

Activities for deeper understanding

- Always begin and end prayer with the *Sign of the Cross*.
- Always make the *Sign of the Cross* slowly and with great reverence.
- If you notice that you have not been attentive in addressing the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit when praying the *Sign of the Cross*, simply repeat it again with greater reverence.
- When you dip your fingers into the holy water fountain, make the Sign of the Cross with great reverence while you prayerfully say the words. Take your time and think about the wonderful fact that you are addressing the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- Make a request of Jesus for a specific need, such as healing for a sick child, help to find a good job, rain for the farmers, safe travel in a storm, etc.



When a prayer is answered, it makes faith come alive and will help you to deepen your relationship with Him. At a time when you have a specific prayer that was answered, it is most helpful for you to write it down, in order to remember it in the future, and then possibly relate it to a trusted friend.

- One thing you can be sure of is that God always answers every prayer. The answer might be “yes”, the answer could be “no”, or the answer could be “not yet” because God knows there is a “right timing” involved and that timing has not yet come. Sometimes the answer is “yes” because God knows that what you are praying for is for your good. Sometimes, the answer to your prayer might be “no” because sometimes you pray for something that you think will be the best thing for you, while indeed, you are wrong. Thank goodness the answer from God is sometimes ‘no,’ if what you are asking for is not good for you. And sometimes the answer to your prayer is “not yet” because God’s timing is always perfect. For example: He knows that you need a more mature disposition of heart in order to receive the answer. Further, this could also include the hearts of other persons as well as circumstances surrounding the situation.

When you seemingly don't receive an answer because of God's perfect timing, you need to remember the importance of patience.

- The answer to prayer may also come in the form of silence, which is also guidance for you from the Lord. A lesson to learn from this situation – feeling like God is not responding over a long period of time – is to grow in your trust of Jesus; that He always wants what is best for you. Jesus is always good even when the circumstances around you are seemingly difficult and last much longer than you want them to. The “Good News” is that “God is shaping all things together for good for those who love Him.” (Romans 8:28) It is the very nature of Who He is. Nothing in the world can change that; and you want to hold onto this truth with your whole heart for the duration.



- Jesus desires a relationship with you. You don't want to just ask for good things from God with no desire to speak with Him and develop a friendship with Him.

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 you pray by making the *Sign of the Cross*, you acknowledge that Jesus is God, and in so doing you receive God's favor – His grace- which makes you joyful/happy.
- Each time you pray the *Sign of the Cross*, you remind yourself of God's love for you, of the sacrifice Jesus made to give you eternal life in Heaven, and of the presence of the Holy Spirit within you. This *Sign* marks you as a Christian and is a visible expression of your belief and hope in God. Therefore, the *Sign of the Cross* is very important and cannot become routine.
- You can “sign” yourself at any time as “the *Sign of the Cross* strengthens you in temptations and difficulties.” (CCC 2157)
- You make the *Sign of the Cross* to show God you believe in Him as 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* strengthens us in temptations and difficulties.” (CCC 2157)
- Further, the *Catechism* states that “The *Sign of the Cross* makes kings of all those reborn in Christ” through the waters of Baptism (paragraph 786). Christ is a King, who served you to the point of giving His life for you. When you were baptized, and the *Sign of the Cross* was made on your forehead, you 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, you are to be a king, 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 you make this Sign and pray the words, you are declaring that you belong to Christ through the Sacrament of Baptism and that you 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 you pray with your heart, you will come to know our Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit personally and deeply. As your friendship with Jesus grows, you will recognize more and more how much He loves you and how much you love Him. From this love, received and given, you will respond from a natural desire to be one with Jesus in all things, and live your life in a way that is reflective of His own. This brings much peace and happiness (joy) to yourself and those around you.
- In Sacred Art, our Heavenly Father is portrayed as a grandfather. However, the Father is not a grandfather. He is outside of time and space. He is a Divine 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 Divine Person, pure spirit, without a body.

Spiritual Comprehension

- The *Sign of the Cross* is a most important prayer that you will want to have good understanding before you decide to go deeper with another prayer. Plan to spend an entire year focusing specifically on the *Sign of the Cross*.**



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

- Take some time to quiet down interiorly. As you pray the *Sign of the Cross*, notice what word(s) or phrase stood out for you. For example: “Father” or “Glory be to the Father.” Repeat the name or phrase over and over again slowly. Think about our Heavenly Father and His love and care for you. Have a “heart – to-Heart conversation with the Father, about something that is weighing on your heart. This takes prayer to the next level of a deep personal encounter. Another helpful step is to write down some notes about your prayer experience.
- You will 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)

