

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.



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

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 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.

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*.**

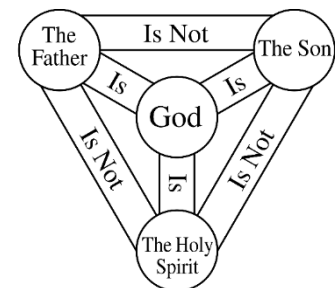


Encountering the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in Prayer

- 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)



The Glory Be
Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

- The *Sign of the Cross* is a most important prayer. If the *Sign of the Cross* becomes well understood, and there is time before the end of the year, you will also want to go deeper in your understanding of the *Glory Be* prayer.

Why do we want to pray the *Glory Be* every day?

- 1) To be ever conscious of God's love and goodness because He created us out of love, in His image and likeness. We are His creation; we are His children.
- 2) To learn how to pray the *Glory Be* reverently, being aware that we are giving glory and praise to the Person of the Father, the Person of the Son, Jesus, and the Person of the Holy Spirit.
- 3) To be constantly reminded to turn upward toward God, knowing that He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- 4) To offer praise and glory to God in *everything* that we do.

The Meaning of the Words

- **Glory be to the Father,**

We are to give glory and praise to God because He created us out of His love and goodness, and He sent His Son, Jesus, to save us from Satan, sin and death. "Praise [giving glory] is the form of prayer which recognizes most immediately that God is God. It lauds [exalts, magnifies] God for His own sake and gives Him glory, quite beyond what He does, but simply because HE IS. It shares in the blessed happiness of the pure of heart who love God in faith before seeing Him in glory. By praise, the Spirit is joined to our spirits to bear witness that we are children of God, testifying to the only Son in whom we are adopted and by whom we **glorify** the Father. Praise embraces the other forms of prayer and carries them toward Him who is its source and goal: the 'one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist'" (CCC 2639). God is the Supreme Being and nothing exists outside of His will, goodness and love. God does not need to be glorified but He deserves to be given glory – our ultimate expression of honor and worship – through our belief, prayer and actions. "St. Bonaventure explains that God created all things 'not to increase His glory, but to show forth and communicate it,' for God has no other reason for creating than His love and goodness" (CCC 293). God is love itself and love is always giving to the other; God is always giving to us.

We are made whole, blessed, fulfilled, and brought to perfection in our glorifying God. God is thrilled when someone receives His love and gives Him glory by thanking and praising Him.

"The glory of God consists in the realization of this manifestation and communication of his goodness, for which the world was created. God made us 'to be His sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of his glorious grace', for 'the glory of God is man fully alive...'" (CCC 294).

And to the Son

We are to give glory and praise to God the Son – Jesus – because He is our Savior. Due to sin, we were separated from our Heavenly Father. Jesus willingly gave His life for us by dying on the Cross, so that we could be reunited with the Father, as His adopted children. He rescues us from the consequences of sin and death.

And to the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, through His passion, death and Resurrection, obtained for us the gift of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, from the Father, enabling us to become His children and to live our lives as He would have us, free from the poison of sin and its consequences. We give glory and praise to God the Holy Spirit because He now lives within us through Baptism, and He strengthens us with His power to live free from sin.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

God is eternal without beginning or end. This is how it was in the beginning and will be forever.

Amen. The word Amen at the end of the prayer means, “So be it.” (CCC 2856) This signifies that we believe the words that we are praying

Learning the Principles

- We are called to give glory to God, because He is our Creator and Lord.
- The *Glory Be* prayer is a doxology. This is a Greek word meaning an expression of glory or praise of God. We give Him glory because He is our origin and destiny. Christians pray this prayer as a way of summing up all their feelings and intentions at the end of some longer prayer. In a sense, the glory of God is the purpose and the content of all our prayers and actions, and so we bring them all together as our act of glorifying God in the Blessed Trinity.
- “All the activities of the Church are directed, as toward their end, to the sanctification [purification of Christians and making us holy] of men in Christ and the glorification of God [giving God glory].” (CCC 824)
- This kind of prayer – of giving glory to God – is found most of all in the Mass. The *Gloria prayer* is prayed at Mass every Sunday except during Lent. The words of this prayer help us to understand the meaning of giving glory to God.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

**We praise You, we bless You, we adore You, we glorify You,
we give You thanks for your great glory,**

Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,

Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,

You take away the sin of the world,

have mercy on us;

You take away the sin of the world,

receive our prayer;

You are seated at the right hand of the Father,

have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One;

you alone are the Lord.

You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,



with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God, the Father. Amen

The *Eucharistic prayer*, which contains the high point of each Mass—the consecration of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ—ends with the beautiful prayer:

Through Him, with Him, and in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, **all glory and honor is Yours, Almighty Father**, forever and ever. Amen.

At Holy Mass on Sunday, another prayer of glory is prayed at the end of the Our Father. This doxology is similar to the *Glory Be* prayer and has the same purpose.

For the kingdom, and the power, and the **glory are Yours**, now and forever.

Ending a prayer with this kind of praise was common in Old Testament worship and is often used in the New Testament by St. Paul in his epistles, St. Peter in his letters, and St. John in the book of Revelation.

- We pray the *Glory Be* prayer most often when praying the *Rosary*, at the end of each decade, or a set of ten *Hail Marys*.
- If at any point in our lives, in joy or in sorrow, in the middle of troubles or struggles, in hope and in fear, when perhaps we cannot find the words, we can always pray perfectly that God may be glorified always, and so we will be praying for all we really want. In a way, we will be praying as God “prays,” since the Savior prayed in the face of His deepest suffering, “Now, Father, glorify your Son with the glory He had before the world began”—that is, “as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.”

Scriptural Foundation

- All creation, including the angels give glory to God: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” Luke 2:14
- “The only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Romans 16:27)
- “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31)
- “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:10-11)
- “Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” Philippians 4:20
- “And has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” Revelation 1:6
- “Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him.” Revelation 14:7
- “Give glory to the LORD your God.” Jeremiah 13:16
- “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands.” (Psalm 19:1)
- Chronicles 29:11; Daniel 3:24-90