



Christian Actions

The Sign of The Cross

Christian prayer is modelled after the prayer of Jesus.

Like his, it should come from the heart.

When he prayed Jesus used words and signs and sometimes cries, as expressions of his heart.

And so do we when we pray; our hearts too look for an outward voice.

The words and signs that Jesus used when he prayed came from his own Jewish tradition – from what he learned in his family and from others. We turn to our Christian tradition for guidance in prayer. We believe it is a tradition inspired by the Holy Spirit, and it also grows out of the Jewish tradition of prayer that nourished Jesus.

The Christian tradition of prayer has a wisdom all its own, with many different forms and expressions.

Some basic prayers of our Christian tradition, however, have a special place. **The Sign of the Cross is one example.**

The Sign of the Cross is an important part of personal and public prayer.

It originated in the earliest days of Christianity – and so it is centuries old.

Its the first sign made on us at Baptism and the last sign made as we pass from this life.

Its a vital part of liturgical prayer and the sacraments.

With the Sign of the Cross we begin and end our prayers.

A Blessing of the Triune God

We call it a blessing. In fact, many say we, *bless ourselves*.

Tracing with our hand the figure of the cross on our forehead, breast and shoulders, we *bless ourselves* (we call the cross onto ourselves as the very sign of our life in Jesus):

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

The Sign of the Cross expresses blessing.

It symbolizes God blessing us, God embracing us with blessings.

And in this same sign we express our belief in God from whom all our blessings flow.

In the Sign of the Cross we embrace God with mind and heart and all of our strength.

God blesses.

Jewish scriptures describe God as, above all, the One who blesses.

God blessed Noah and saved the world from the flood.

God blessed Abraham and Sara with blessings more than the stars in the sky.

God blessed the Jewish people, redeeming them from the slavery of Egypt.

Life itself and all creation are God's gifts.

And so the Jewish tradition of prayer always approaches God as One who blesses.

"I will bless the Lord at all times," the psalmist prays.

As we are blessed by God, so we bless the Lord in return.

The Christian tradition of prayer follows this same pattern, but in addition it praises the One who blesses for another incomparable blessing: the blessing of Jesus Christ. **Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has bestowed on us in Christ every spiritual blessing.** (Ephesians 1, 3

He is **the Word who made the universe, the Saviour sent to redeem us.**

In Jesus Christ God appears as our Friend and Brother.

With the Father he sends the Holy Spirit upon us to complete his work on earth and bring us the fullness of grace.

In Jesus, God has revealed to us the source of all blessings.

When we *bless* ourselves with the Sign of the Cross we remember the One who blesses us:
the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Blessed by the Cross

With the Sign of the Cross we recall in particular the blessing of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We trace a cross on ourselves, the cross of Jesus.

His death on the Cross was an outpouring of love for us.

The Sign of the Cross is a reminder of his love, a love found not only in the past, but here and now, as we make this sign upon ourselves; for the love of Jesus Christ abides forever.

The Sign of the Cross is a wonderful daily expression of our relationship with God.

God is the One who blesses. This prayer reminds us that each day, in good times and bad, in danger and sorrow, God's care and blessings are never far from us.

Tracing this holy sign on our forehead, our hearts and our shoulders, we remember we are blessed in mind and heart and all our being. We can approach God with confidence through Jesus Christ whose ever present love this holy sign recalls.

Come to me, God says through this prayer, do not be afraid. Before you take one step, I reach to embrace you with blessings in my hands.

At Mass

1. I open my hand, dip it in the water of Baptism set aside in the **STOUP** at the door of the church – and touch my brow,

In the name of the Father

Come bless me, God, come bless me, bless me in every way.

Come bless what I see, and bless what I hear, and bless what I think and say.

Then I touch my heart with my hand, and say

and of the Son

Bless me, Jesus, bless my heart that I may love everyone.

I touch my shoulders left and right,

and of the Holy Spirit

Amen.

2. I open my hand as the Priest opens the mass – and touch my brow . . .

In the name of the Father . . .

3. I open my hand as the Priest begins his homily – and touch my brow . . .

May I speak in the name of the Father . . .

4. I open my hand (twice) as the Priest brings the Body and Blood of Jesus to me – and touch my brow . . .

5. I open my hand as the Priest blesses me at the end of mass – and touch my brow . . .