



What's What

A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.

The Sign of the Cross

The sign of the cross is a visible sign (a sacramental) of one's belief in Christ and of one's hope in the redemption which flows from His Cross. Accompanied by the invocation of the Trinity, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit", making a sign of the cross is a simple and beautiful form of Christian devotion. By making this sign both in public and in private we affirm our faith in Christ crucified and ask for His blessing and protection. It is also a gesture of reverence to the Blessed Sacrament.

This Christian sign is a very ancient one, mentioned by the early Fathers of the Church as being a habitual practice by the second century. Tertullian recounts that "in all our travels in all our

coming in and going out, in putting on our shoes, at the bath, at the table we mark our foreheads with the sign of the cross." This sign or mark on the forehead of consecration to Christ has an antecedent in Ezekiel's prophetic vision of judgment, in which the Lord commands that a "mark be set upon the foreheads" of the Israelites who cry out against the evil which surrounds them, so that by this mark God's people were identified as belonging to Him and saved from annihilation (Ezekiel: 9:4-6)...

This sacramental "mark" is important to Catholic people to this day. We are anointed, at baptism and at confirmation, by the priest making the sign of the cross on our foreheads with the Oil of Chrism

(the oil blessed by bishops at the Mass of Chrism on Holy Thursday). The sign and the chrism are also used at the ordination of a priest or bishop. In administering the sacrament of the sick the priest anoints the person with the sign of the cross made with blessed oil. Also, on Ash Wednesday, our foreheads are marked with the sign of the cross made with blessed palm ashes.

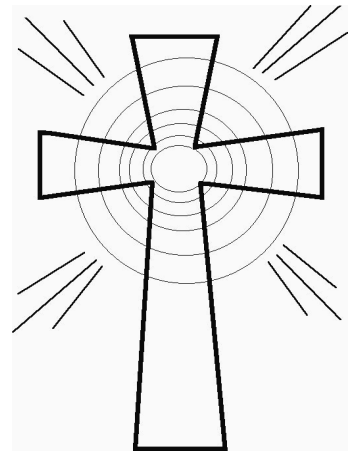
...The sign of the cross is made by the priest several times during the celebration of Mass and when he grants absolution and gives other priestly blessings... It is also made when a priest blesses religious objects such as rosaries, medals, vestments and articles used in connection with Mass.

From: www.catholic.org/clife/lent/friday.php

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The Sign of the Cross
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Things to talk about:

- Who taught you to make the sign of the cross?
- When do you make the sign of the cross?
- What does the sign of the cross mean to you?



The Sign of the Cross Before We Hear the Gospel

Before proclaiming the Gospel at Mass, the priest or deacon makes the sign of the cross on the text of the Gospel and then on his forehead, lips and heart. At the same time the priest or deacon says "Jesus be on my mind, on my lips and in my heart." In the past, the congregation said these words along with the priest, now we make a small sign of the

cross on our own head, lips, and mouth.

Signing the book and ourselves reminds us of the love

***Jesus be on my mind,
on my lips
and in my heart.***

and respect we need to have for God and his Word. We

need to always have Jesus' words and example on our minds, keep him close to our hearts, and to be ready to share his word with the world.

In the book *Signs, Words and Gestures* (Pueblos), Balthasar Fischer puts it this way: "The Sign of the Cross on forehead, lips and heart also has to do with this lord who is entering the assembly and will now

speak. Everyone present is saying as it were, 'Now I must pay attention. It is my Lord who speaks. Since my Baptism I have belonged to him body and soul, in my thoughts, words and feelings.'"

In other words, we need to be completely and entirely devoted to Christ in all of our life.



Saint in the Spotlight — Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

On Monday this week, January 28, we celebrate the memorial of St Thomas Aquinas.

By universal consent Thomas Aquinas is the preeminent spokesman of the Catholic tradition of reason and of divine revelation. He is one of the great teachers of the medieval Catholic Church, honored with the titles Doctor of the Church and Angelic Doctor.

At five he was given to the Benedictine monastery at Monte Cassino in his parents' hopes that he would choose that way of life and later become abbot. In 1239 he was sent to Naples to complete his studies. It was here that he was first attracted to Aristotle's philosophy.

By 1243, Thomas abandoned his family's plans for him and joined the Dominicans, much to his mother's dismay. On her order, Thomas was captured by his brother and kept at home for over a year.

Once free, he went to Paris and then to Cologne, where he finished his studies with Albert the Great. He held two professorships at Paris, lived at the court of

Pope Urban IV, directed the Dominican schools at Rome and Viterbo, combated adversaries of the mendicants, as well as the Averroists, and argued with some Franciscans about Aristotelianism.

His greatest contribution to the Catholic Church is his writings. The unity, harmony and continuity of faith and reason, of revealed and natural human knowledge, pervades his writings. One might expect Thomas, as a man of the gospel, to be an ardent defender of revealed truth. But he was broad enough, deep enough, to see the whole natural order as coming from God the Creator, and to see reason as a divine gift to be highly cherished.

The *Summa Theologiae*, his last and, unfortunately, uncompleted work, deals with the whole of Catholic theology. He stopped work on it after celebrating Mass on December 6, 1273. When asked why he stopped writing, he replied, "I cannot go on.... All that I have written seems to me like so much straw compared to what I have seen and what has been revealed to me." He died March 7, 1274.

Quote:

"Hence we must say that for the knowledge of any truth whatsoever man needs divine help, that the intellect may be moved by God to its act. But he does not need a new light added to his natural light, in order to know the truth in all things, but only in some that surpasses his natural knowledge"
(*Summa Theologiae*, I-II, 109, 1).

www.americancatholic.org/Features/SaintOfDay



Want to know more?

Would you like to know more about the sign of the cross? Check out the following books or websites for more information:

- [Sign of the Cross](#), by Bert Ghezzi, Loyola Press, 2004
- [Catholic Customs & Traditions](#), Greg Dues, Twenty-Third Publications, 2003
- www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/Apr2004/prayers.asp

These are just suggestions. In providing these we assume no responsibility for, nor do we necessarily endorse these books or websites, their content, or their sponsoring organizations.

Connections to Doctrine & Tradition

Read the following Church Documents to find out more about Ecumenism in the Catholic Church. They can be found online at www.vatican.va or www.usccb.org

- In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (CCC 232-237)
- Catholic Christians begin and end prayers with the Sign of the Cross (CCC 2166)

"What's What" is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement [Draft]:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.