

A Sign of Our Belonging

Greetings as we continue to enjoy the summer!

When we think of praying, we often think we need many words. But God knows our intentions and the longings of our heart. A simple Sign of the Cross at the beginning and the end of the day affirms that we know to whom we belong, and the power given to live our lives in the sacraments.

We make the Sign of the Cross, and as we do so, we say silently or aloud, “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” This gesture dedicates us and everything we do in our lives to the glory of God. We embrace with confidence our Father’s love, invite into our hearts the grace of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and invoke the power of the Spirit, which was sent upon us in our Baptism and Confirmation.

Model confidence with the Sign of the Cross by beginning prayers with it.

Baptism is the place from which this powerful gesture emanates. At the mountain in Galilee, Jesus said to his disciples, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). In the baptismal rite, the priest traces the Sign of the Cross on the infant’s (or child’s or adult’s) forehead, and invites the parents and the godparents to do the same. This powerful gesture of welcome will be repeated after the immersion in water when Chrism is used to anoint the newly baptized. The prayer affirms that “you may remain forever a member of Christ, who is Priest, Prophet, and King.”

Incorporating the Sign of the Cross, which both affirms our Baptism and recalls it, into daily life can be a powerful source of blessing. Consider signing your children’s foreheads with the Sign of the Cross as they complete their bedtime prayers. Sign them as they head out to the school bus, or on days that seem hard or challenging, such as when they are facing a test or a tryout for a sport or extracurricular activity. Model confidence with the Sign of the Cross by beginning



your prayers with it, even if you are saying grace in a public setting. Invite your children to sign you if they are with you in a period of difficulty or sadness. All are blessed, and all can impart blessing!

Just as our liturgical prayer is bookended by the Sign of the Cross, so are our lives. When we receive the Anointing of the Sick, we are again signed with holy oil (the oil of the sick). Although not formally part of a ritual, many family members make the Sign of the Cross on the forehead of their beloved dead before a casket is closed for the last time. As we had put on Christ in Baptism for our earthly life, now we have put on Christ for our eternal life with him.

The sign of his Cross, scribed on our bodies in this simple gesture, reminds us of who we are and to whom we belong.