

Back to Basics: The Declaration of the Sign of the Cross

by Karen Pourbabae

Then Cardinal Ratzinger once wrote: “The most basic Christian gesture in prayer is and always will be the sign of the Cross.” St. Basil identified it as a hallmark of the apostolic faith. Martin Luther advocated its performance at bedtime and each morning. Besides its significance to Catholics, today it is still utilized in some way by Episcopalian, Methodist, and Presbyterian believers. At our beginnings, we are sealed with the sign of the Cross at our baptism...marked as belonging to the Lord...and our Catholic journey can be enriched by this simple yet powerful sign of our personal living faith.

The sign of the Cross is a simple gesture, but packed with the significant truths of our Catholic faith. It proclaims the Trinity, the Incarnation, and our redemption in Christ. In his book, **Sign of the Cross: Power of the Ancient Prayer**, Bert Ghezzi identifies its multifaceted significance:

- **Confession of faith**- it’s like a mini-creed professing belief in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- **Renewal of Baptism**- used as a sacramental it proclaims “I died with Christ and rose to new life.”
- **Mark of discipleship**- it is a declaration that we belong to Christ and follow Him
- **Acceptance of suffering**-signing the Cross is our acceptance of suffering and acknowledgement of Christ in time of trials
- **Defense against the devil**- it is both an offensive and defensive tool which declares to the devil we belong to Christ, it’s a “hands off” declaration reminding the devil that God is our protection
- **Victory over self-indulgence**- may be effectively used when tempted to help dispel the problem

Dear Lord,

Open my eyes to the great significance of the sacramental sign of the Cross.

Let it not remain some rote religious exercise. When I perform the sign of the Cross, let my spirit meditate on its declarations and say with my whole heart and mind: I believe. I renew my Baptism. I belong to Christ and follow Him. I will take up my cross and accept suffering with Christ by my side. I declare to the devil that God is my protection and victory is in the name of Christ. Amen.