

Father O'Connor's Homily for 31 May 2026  
The Most Holy Trinity-A

Exodus 34: 4b-6, 8-9  
2 Corinthians 13: 11-13  
John 3: 16-18

Today is the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity: one God in three divine persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Trinity is “the central mystery of our Christian faith and life” [The Catechism of the Catholic Church, #234].

I ask you to make the Sign of the Cross with me now as we acknowledge the Trinity: “In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

We make that Sign of the Cross so naturally, almost like blinking.

While the Orthodox and some other Christian people also make the Sign of the Cross, this gesture with these words is a fundamental part of our Catholic identity. If you see someone making the Sign of the Cross in a restaurant before they begin to eat, you can pretty well bet that they are a Catholic.

I was talking about this with a minister-friend of mine. As fellow Christians we both believe in the Trinity and in the gift of salvation through the cross of Jesus. And yet I would begin and end our prayer together with the Sign of the Cross, and he would simply bow his head. I asked him why.

He told me that he really did not know. But he figured that it came out of the Reformation. As he put it, with a twinkle in his eye, “Probably we Protestants don't do this because you Catholics do!” Thanks be to God, we are coming a lot closer together as fellow Christians these days, with God's grace.

The Sign of the Cross is a gesture that your parents taught you to make as a child. Perhaps they – and your early teachers – would smile as you tried to remember whether the gesture was from your left shoulder to your right – which is customary among Latin Rite Catholics. Or the other way around, from your right shoulder to your left – which is customary among many Eastern Rite Catholics.

You will also notice that many Eastern Rite Catholics add another feature to the Sign of the Cross, and it involves the placement of the fingers of the right hand. The thumb and first two fingers are held together as a

threesome, signifying the three divine persons of the Trinity. The last two fingers are pressed together to the palm of the hand, signifying the two natures of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Mary: an eternal divine nature and a created-in-time human nature, and with both distinct natures belonging to the one Divine Person of the Son,

As Catholics, we begin and end our prayers with the Sign of the Cross. In fact, at this Mass, the first words I spoke and the first gesture that we made together was the Sign of the Cross. And we will end this Mass in the same way with the final blessing.

The Sign of the Cross is used in the sacraments.

At the Baptism of a baby, the priest or deacon, the parents and the Godparents make the Sign of the Cross with their thumb upon the child's forehead. And then the child is baptized with a triple pouring of water— or a triple immersion in water – with the words, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

In the Sacrament of Penance, we receive absolution from our sins accompanied by the Sign of the Cross in the name of the Trinity.

We also make that Sign of the Cross when we wake up and say our morning prayers and before going to bed when we say our night prayers.

People make the Sign of the Cross in times of anxiety – as students often do before taking an exam, or as a ball player might do before going to bat.

We take Holy Water and make the Sign of the Cross as we enter the church as a reminder that we became members of the Church Family when we were Baptized.

The Sign of the Cross will be made over us for the last time when we are buried.

Whenever we make the Sign of the Cross devoutly, we are professing our belief in two fundamental Christian doctrines.

The first is our belief in the Most Holy Trinity. Jesus Christ revealed this truth to us. There is one eternal God in three distinct divine Persons. God the Father created us. God the Son redeemed us. And God the Holy Spirit sustains us with His gifts of grace.

The second belief that we profess when we make the Sign of the Cross is that we are saved by Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. And so we acknowledge the Trinity as we trace that cross on our bodies. As the third Memorial Acclamation pleads: “Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection you have set us free.”

There is a story about a factory worker who opened his lunchbox and made the Sign of the Cross as he prayed his grace before meals. Another worker saw him do this and made fun of him.

“Oh, I see you are a Catholic,” he taunted.

“Yes, I am,” he replied.

“Well why don’t you forget all that ritual stuff and just confess that Jesus Christ is your personal Lord and Savior?”

“I just did,” the man replied. “I made the Sign of the Cross in public.”

When we stand before God at the end of our lives, we will not be asked for a driver’s license or a passport, an investment portfolio or a PIN number.

We will be asked about what lies beneath our making the Sign of the Cross so often each day. Have we truly lived the Christian life by always remembering: (1) that the three persons of the Blessed Trinity live within us through the life of grace, and (2) that this gift was won for us by Jesus’ death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead?

For the Trinity is “the central mystery of our Christian faith and life” [The Catechism of the Catholic Church, #234].

And so, let us finish today as we began: “In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”