



Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

3101 Clairmont Ave. Birmingham, AL 35205

Church Tel. 930-9681 / 907-9447

Visit stsymeon.com

✘ **September 14, 2014** ✘

Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross

Repose of St. John Chrysostom,
Archbishop of Constantinople (407)



- **Tues. Sept 16 6:30pm** Inquirer's Class
- **Wed. Sept. 17 6:30pm** Choir Rehearsal
- **Thurs. Sept. 18 6:30pm** Book Study Group

Saturday, September 27 – Landscaping Workday! 6:00am till...
Bring your own tools please. Please confirm if you're able to participate.
(Lunch provided)

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

By St. John Maximovitch, 1964

*Sermon on the raising of the Crosses upon the new Cathedral of the
Mother of God, The Joy of All Who Sorrow, in San Francisco, October
1964.*

IN THE NAME of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

*The Cross, preserver of the entire universe; the Cross, adornment of the Church; the
Cross, strengthening of the faithful; the Cross, glory of the angels and scourge of
demons.*

Yet a long time before the coming of Christ on earth, when Moses was leading the Israelites to the Promised land, when the Israelites had sinned, the Lord sent upon them serpents (snakes); but later He commanded Moses to hang a brass serpent on a high tree, on a high pillar, and whoever looked upon this brass serpent would receive healing from the wounds given by the serpents. As that time the brass serpent was a prefiguration of Christ crucified on the Cross.

And thus the Lord has given us the Cross as an all-powerful assistance and defense against all misfortunes and sorrows. The Lord saved us by the Cross from eternal death! And the Lord helps us by the Cross in this life also. {over}

When there was a terrible persecution of Christians and the Lord was pleased to put an end to it, He revealed the sign of the Cross high in the heavens to Emperor Constantine, and around the Cross was written: *By this sign conquer!* When Constantine made a sign in the form of a cross, by this sign he conquered the enemy.

Thus the Lord gives us the Cross in order to defend us from all misfortunes, from all evils, in order to defend us from the prince of this world, the devil. Now we are raising the sign of the Cross here over San Francisco; we are raising the Cross that it might guard this city, that it might preserve each of us. The Cross is raised as a sign of the victory of Christ over the devil, as a sign at the victory of Christ over all who rise against Him. The Cross as an all-powerful weapon, the Cross is a sign of victory. And thus, when now the Cross is raised above us and blesses the city of San Francisco, this is our sign, this is our weapon against all temptations, against all misfortunes, against all disasters.

When we shall see from afar the Cross shining above our Cathedral, we shall bring to mind that Christ the Crucified, Christ the All-powerful, Christ our Savior is with us. When any kind of bad feeling will come into someone's mind, then let him look at this

Cross and stop and remember that this Cross will appear also when the fearful trumpets will sound and Christ will come on the clouds; then the sign of the Cross will appear as the sign of Christ, as the sign of the end of the world.

Let the Cross guard us both on our travels and when we are home. Let us, whether from afar, or riding by here, or walking past, behold the holy Cross and bring to mind Christ the Lord crucified for us, Who suffered for our sins in order to grant us the eternal Kingdom when He shall judge the whole world with the Cross. Day and night let the Cross remind us of the Crucified, let it bless us and give help in our affairs here. And let them be done to the glory of God, and not for the fulfillment of our lusts and whims.

Let the Cross bless all who travel to San Francisco. When anyone shall sail away from San Francisco, may this Cross bring blessing to him on his journey. When people shall come to up to this city an ships — let San Francisco meet them with the Cross, as a blessing that their stay here may be safe and for the glory of God. Let the Cross bless all who are in this city, all who come and go. Let it eternally remind us of Christ, Who suffered for us, was crucified, arose, ascended to Heaven and preserves us by His Cross. Let us give thanks to the Lord God that He has given us the Cross for His weapon. Let us give thanks to the Lord God and let us not forget that the Cross is our weapon and at the same time reminds us of the Lord's Last Judgment also: We thank Thee, O Lord! Save us, O Lord, by the power of Thy Cross! Save and guard by the power of Thy Cross, through the prayers of the Mother of God and all the Saints! *Before Thy Cross we bow down, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection we glorify!*

And we shall be united around this Cross, for the Lord has said, "By this they shall know that ye are My disciples, if ye shall love one another. Before Thy Cross we bow down, O Lord, and Thy holy Resurrection we glorify! + + +

The Fathers – On the Cross

Everyone bears his cross, and you bear your cross, even though it is only the size of a finger; you still bear it. The bearing of a cross is absolutely necessary for every Christian for his salvation, and not only for monks. Yes, everyone bears a cross, and has borne a cross: even the Incarnate God bore a cross, and His Cross was the heaviest, as if combining in itself all the crosses of mankind. And take note: God is carrying the Cross and a man (Simon the Cyrenian) helps Him. He takes the Cross from Him and carries it himself. This means that by bearing our crosses we help the Lord to carry the Cross, i.e., we are preparing to be His servants in Heaven in the choir of bodiless Spirits *What a high calling!*

St. Barsanouphios of Optina

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

We faithful have a great weapon-this is the power of the Life-giving Cross. Think how terrifying it becomes for unbelievers; they are completely helpless. It is as if a person set out completely unarmed into the thick forest at night. Yes, the first beast he came across would tear him up, and he would have nothing to defend himself with. But we will not be afraid of the demons! The power of the sign of the Cross and the name of Jesus is terrifying to the enemies of Christ, and saves us from the evil nets of the demons.

St. Barsanouphios of Optina

One must make the sign of the Cross on oneself either with the name of the Holy Trinity, saying "In the name of The Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," or with the Name of One of the Trinity, Who became incarnate for our sake and was voluntarily crucified, saying, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner!"

St. Ambrose of Optina

AndOn the Eucharist

For when the Lord says, 'unless you have eaten the flesh of the Son of Man, and drunk His blood, you will not have life in you' (John 6:54), you ought so to be partakers at the Holy Table, as to have no doubt whatever concerning the reality of Christ's Body and Blood. For that is taken in the mouth which is believed in Faith, and it is vain for them to respond "Amen" who dispute that which is taken (Sermons, No. 91:3).5

St. Leo the Great (461)

'My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink' (John 6:56). You hear Him speak of His Flesh and of His Blood, you perceive the sacred pledges (conveying to us the grace and power) of the Lord's death, and you dishonor His Godhead? Hear His own words: "A spirit has not flesh and bones' (Lk 24:39). Now we, as often as we receive the Sacramental Elements, which by the mysterious efficacy of holy prayer are transformed into the Flesh and the Blood, 'do show the Lord's Death' (1 Cor 11:26) (To Gratian, On the Christian Faith, 4.10).

St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (5th C)

Another ancient catechism that defended the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist was written by Macarius, Bishop of Magnesia. In his book of catechetical instruction written in c. 400, Bishop Macarius clearly defined Christ's presence in the offering of the bread and wine of the Eucharist: "Christ took the bread and the cup, each in similar fashion, and said: "This is My Body and this My Blood." Not a figure of His body or a figure of His blood, as some persons of petrified mind are wont to rhapsodize, but in truth the Body and the Blood of Christ, seeing that His body is from the earth, and the bread and the wine are likewise from the earth" (Apocryticus, 3.23).

AN EXPLANATION OF THE ORTHODOX THREE-BAR CROSS

By Fr. Theodore Jurewicz

The Top Bar - The Explanation:

The top bar is the title-board, which Pilate ordered to be hung in mockery over Christ's head on the Cross. On this board was inscribed: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin (abbreviated to the Greek initials 'INBI' or the Latin initials 'INRI' in the Western tradition). This is replaced with the Christian inscription: "King of Glory" - below the knees of the angels. On the title-board is inscribed the initials 'IC XC', being the first and last letters of Christ's name in Greek. In addition, just above Christ's arms we see the inscription: 'NIKA', which in Greek means: "He conquers" or "He is victorious." Frequently, we see these last two inscriptions together: 'IC XC NIKA', meaning: "Jesus Christ is victorious" (over death and sin).



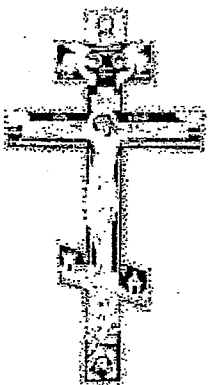
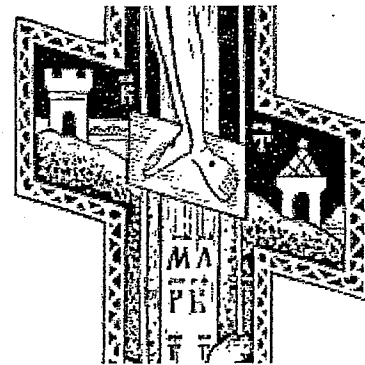
The Middle Bar - The Explanation:

The middle bar is that on which the Lord's hands were nailed. On either top corner we see the depiction of the sun (left) and the moon (right), for "The sun hid its light, and the moon turned to blood." (Joel 2:31) The inscription: "Son of God" is placed on both sides of Christ's head, and below His arms we read the inscription: "Before Thy Cross we bow down, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection, we glorify". The halo of Christ is inscribed with three Greek letters meaning "The Being" or "He Who Is", to remind us that Christ is the same God Who identified Himself with those words to Moses in the Old Law.



The Bottom Bar - The Explanation:

The slanted bottom bar is the footrest. There is some question of whether it was actually on the Cross of Christ, but it is acknowledged to be a necessary attribute of the Cross, worthy of veneration and prophetically alluded to in the words [Let us] worship the footstool of His feet... (Ps. 98:5). In prayers for the Ninth Hour, the Church likens the Cross to a type of balance of righteousness: "Between two thieves Thy Cross did prove to be a balance of righteousness: wherefore one of them was dragged down to Hades by the weight of his blasphemy whereas the other was lightened of his transgressions unto the comprehension of theology. O Christ God, glory to Thee." The meaning of this prayer is as follows: the Cross of Christ stood for a scale of justice between the two thieves: for one of them sank in to hell, dragged down by his blasphemous words; and the other, the wise thief, ascended into heaven, because of his repentance. The church fathers attempted to render tangible the thought of the unfaithful thief going to hell for his blasphemy through the just judgment of God (the lower end of the bar), and of the wise thief going to heaven for his repentance and his praise of God (the upper end).



The Images - The Explanation:

On the Cross is our Savior, Jesus Christ. Note that He does not wear a crown of thorns, and that His feet are nailed with two nails. Behind the body of Christ, on either side, are a lance (which pierced Him) and a sponge (which was soaked with gall and offered to Christ to drink) on a pole made of reed or cane. On the body of Christ is depicted blood and water flowing forth from His side. Below the feet of Christ is four Slavonic letters meaning: "The place of the skull became Paradise". Hidden in a cave under the earth is 'the skull of Adam'. We are thus reminded that Adam our forefather lost Paradise through the tree from which he wrongly partook; Christ is the new Adam, bringing us Salvation and Paradise through the tree of the Cross. The city of Jerusalem is depicted in the background, for He was crucified outside the city walls.

2,000 Years of Saints - Part III

Dr. David C. Ford, PhD

Fifteenth Century

St. Andrei Rublev - probably the greatest iconographer of all time, most famous for his icon of the Holy Trinity; helped to paint the iconostasis of the great new Church of the Holy Trinity at Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Monastery.

St. Mark of Ephesus - Bishop of Ephesus and one of the *Three Pillars of Orthodoxy* (along with St. Photios the Great and St. Gregory Palamas); the only Greek bishop at the Council of Florence (1439) not to accept capitulation to Papal supremacy.

Sts. Stephen the Despot and Angelina - Serbian prince blinded by the Ottoman Turks, and his wife, daughter of the Orthodox prince of Albania; they were exiled by the Turks to Italy, where Stephen died while their three children were still small; St. Angelina took his incorrupt body to Kupinovo, Serbia, where she became an angel of mercy to the poor, being known as "Mother Angelina" and "Mother to the Poor"

Sixteenth Century

The era of the Byzantine Church struggling to adapt to life under the Ottoman yoke, and the Russian Church torn by the monastic controversy between the Possessors and the Non-Possessors; the Russian Church flourishes, then suffers, under Tsar Ivan IV (the Terrible); the Russians finally are granted a Patriarch; the Unia is established in the Ukraine.

St. Maxim the Greek - a great librarian on Mt. Athos, he went to Russia at the invitation of Tsar Vasili (Basil) III to translate Greek works into Slavonic and to help correct the Russian service books; he sided with the Non-Possessor party and was confined to monastic imprisonment for 20 years.

St. Philip of Moscow - Metropolitan of Moscow; after repeated attempts to convince Tsar Ivan the Terrible to stop his ruthless and paranoid slaughter of many of his countrymen, St. Philip publicly rebuked the Tsar during a Divine Liturgy; for this he was soon strangled by one of Ivan's henchmen, in 1569.

St. Julianna Lazarevskaya - a pious housewife of the lesser nobility; treated her servants as equals; was famous for her Christian charity; she prevented many from starving during a famine by making bread out of certain weeds and bark; practiced asceticism and had a rich prayer life while raising seven children; her relics were found to be myrrh-gushing.

Seventeenth Century

The era of the devastating Time of Troubles in Russia, and then rebuilding under the new Romanov Dynasty; the beginning of the Old Believer Schism over disputes concerning enforced changes in liturgical practices; the Council in Moscow of 1666-1667 brings Russian Church practices more in line with those of the Greek Church.

St. Germogen - Patriarch of Moscow; valiant leader of the Russian people in resisting the Polish invasion during the Time of Troubles; was starved to death by the Poles occupying Moscow.

St. Ketevan of Georgia - Queen of Georgia; as the young widow of King David, she ruled effectively as regent for her son Teimuraz during his youth; after retiring from public life, she was captured by the Persians; adamantly refusing to accept Islam, she was held in captivity for ten years; then Shah 'Abbas of Persia, in 1624, finally had her put to death for her steadfast faith in Christ.

St. Angelis the New Martyr - a goldsmith, married with six children; arrested on a false charge and martyred by the Ottoman Turks in Constantinople in 1680; representative of the scores of Orthodox Christians martyred for their Faith during the time of the Turkish yoke.

St. Theodosius of Chernigov - abbot of several Russian monasteries before becoming Archbishop of Chernigov in southwestern Russia; was particularly loved by his flock for his virtue, wisdom, compassion, and pastoral zeal; many miracles have flowed from prayer at his incorrupt relics.

Eighteenth Century

The era of the rise of the revolutionary movement in Greece, along with a spiritual revival there; the Russian Church suffers a forced reorganization under Tsar Peter I, including the loss of her Patriarchate, and with the ruling Church Synod responsible directly to the Tsar; the first Russian missionaries to Alaska arrive there in 1794.

St. Tikhon of Zadonsk - Bishop of Voronezh, in southern Russia; worked diligently to raise the educational and liturgical standards of the priests in his vast diocese; honored as pastor of all Russia; a year after his death, the Synod of the Russian Church published a collection of his writings called *Journey to Heaven*; a wonderworker after his death.

St. Cosmas the Aitolian - a monk on Mt. Athos who left Athos and for 17 years went on long evangelistic journeys throughout central and northern Greece, the Aegean Islands, Epirus, and Albania, exhorting the people to cling to their Orthodox Faith through preserving their Greek language, culture, and heritage; died as a martyr under the Turks in Berat, Albania.

St. Macarios of Corinth - Bishop of Corinth, later a monk on the Island of Chios; a renowned scholar who edited and published many patristic writings; worked with St. Nicodemos in compiling the *Philokalia* and the *Evergenitos* (a collection of lives and sayings of the Desert Fathers), and wrote *Concerning Continual Communion of the Divine Mysteries*.

St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain - scholarly monk who collaborated with St. Macarios of Corinth on many publishing efforts; made a modern Greek translation of some of the New Testament commentaries by Blessed Theophylact; compiled *The Rudder*, the greatest collection of Church canons; and wrote many hymns for saints.

St. Paisy Velichkovsky - a Ukrainian who became an outstanding monastic leader in Romania; made the first Slavic translation of the *Philokalia*;

many of his some 500 disciples spread across the Russian lands in the early 1800s, bringing with them the Slavonic *Philokalia* and St. Paissy's teachings on and example of contemplative monasticism, spiritual direction under a spiritual father, and hesychastic spirituality centered on the Jesus Prayer

St. Juvenaly of Lake Iliamna - America's first Orthodox martyr; he was one of the original group of ten missionary-monks from Valaam Monastery to Alaska; killed by natives in the Alaskan interior

Nineteenth Century

The era of the political liberation of central and southern Greece; the autocephaly of the Church in Greece, Serbia, and Romania; great flourishing of spiritual life in Russia, especially centered around the *startsi* (spiritual elders) at Optino Monastery; extensive missionary work in Siberia and Alaska; massive immigration from eastern Europe and Greece brings Orthodoxy to the eastern and midwestern parts of the United States

St. Gregory V - Patriarch of Constantinople at the time of the Greek Revolution in 1821; he had opposed the revolutionary movement, but nevertheless was executed by the Turks, along with two metropolitans and twelve bishops

St. Seraphim of Sarov - one of the most beloved Russian saints; a hermit-monk for many years, he then began to receive visitors, becoming spiritual adviser to thousands

St. Herman of Alaska - pioneering missionary-monk to the native people of Alaska, whose hearts he won through his saintly, gentle character, his deep hesychastic prayer-life, his miracle-working power, his compassionate care for the poor and needy, and his ardent defense of the natives in the face of economic oppression by their employer, the Russian-American (fur-trading) Company

St. Innocent of Alaska - at first a married missionary priest to Alaska; after the death of his wife, he became Alaska's first Bishop; developed an alphabet for the Aleut language, into which he translated liturgical and scriptural texts; wrote the celebrated *Indication of the Way into the Kingdom of Heaven* in Aleut and Russian; urged the use of English in the Church in America upon the sale of Alaska by Russia to the United States

St. Amvrosy of Optino - the greatest in the great line of *startsi* at the Optino Monastery; along with St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, he inspired the majestic figure of Father Zossima in Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*

St. John of Kronstadt - a parish priest for 53 years in the naval base city of Kronstadt near St. Petersburg; a brilliant preacher, liturgist, and confessor, he also undertook tremendous social service for the poor, including building a "Home of Constructive Labor," which housed a school, a library, a bookshop, and workshops for learning trades; known also as "a genius of prayer" and "a pastor for all Russia"

Twentieth Century

The era of the restoration of the Patriarchate in Mos-

cow; terrible oppression of the Church in the Slavic lands under Soviet Communism; vast emigration from Russia to Western Europe and America, dramatically helping to spread Orthodoxy to the West; active participation of the Orthodox in the Ecumenical Movement, especially in the World Council of Churches

St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre - a former Uniate priest who brought thousands of Uniates into Orthodoxy in Minnesota, Pennsylvania and New England; canonized at St. Tikhon's Monastery in 1994 and interred there

St. Raphael of Brooklyn - a Syrian by birth, he served the Church in Syria and in Russia before coming to America in 1895; was consecrated Bishop of Brooklyn in 1904 (he was the first Orthodox bishop to be consecrated in the New World); served as auxiliary bishop to Archbishop Tikhon, with responsibility for the Arab Orthodox communities scattered across the U.S., Canada and Mexico; he pastored his flock with great energy, wisdom and love, making several trans-continental pastoral journeys; canonized at St. Tikhon's Monastery in 2000

St. Tikhon of Moscow - from 1898 to 1907, Archbishop of the Russian Church in North America; an indefatigable pastor to his vast archdiocese, he founded St. Tikhon's Monastery and called the First All-American Council in Mayfield, Pennsylvania in 1907; then returned to Russia and became Metropolitan of Moscow; presided at the Great Council of Moscow of 1917-1918, where he was made Patriarch; condemned the Bolshevik revolutionaries and died as a confessor for the Faith in a Soviet hospital in 1925

St. Grand Duchess Elizabeth - granddaughter of England's Queen Victoria; elder sister of Tsarina Alexandra, Tsar Nicholas II's wife; converted to Orthodoxy seven years after her marriage to Nicholas II's uncle; after her husband's assassination, she became a nun and established the Martha-Mary Convent of Mercy in Moscow, which she dedicated to serving the poor of the city; martyred by the Bolsheviks in 1918

St. Nectarios of Aegina - Bishop of Pentapolis (Egypt), then director of a school in Athens for 15 years; then rebuilt a ruined monastery on the island of Aegina and was spiritual father for a community of nuns there; a prolific writer on the spiritual life; died in 1920 in Athens; many miracles have occurred at his grave on Aegina, and he has appeared to many in dreams and visions

St. Silouan the Athonite - a Russian peasant who became a monk on Mt. Athos; extraordinarily filled with love, wisdom, and prayer for the whole world; his spiritual wisdom was recorded and published by his disciple, Fr. Sophrony, who started the Monastery of St. John the Baptist in Essex, England

St. Gorazd - a convert to Orthodoxy from Roman Catholicism, he was a leading Orthodox bishop in Czechoslovakia after World War I; was martyred by the Nazis in 1942

And... St. John of San Francisco !

(Written prior to St. John's canonization)

Truly God is wondrous in His Saints!

The Accomplishment of the Cross

Great is the accomplishment of His suffering! He offered Himself as the once and for all sacrifice for sins (Heb. 10:10). Because He was a man, He was able to suffer death, and as God He was able to take upon Himself all of man's sins. Now, not only is forgiveness possible, but also cleansing and deliverance. He is truly the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). The man in the Old Testament was given provision for forgiveness. The man in the New Testament has the hope of being delivered from his sins. They can now be taken away. He no longer needs to be terrorized by sin and the Devil. Christ has freed man from the slavery of sin and has overthrown the Devil. This is why Christ shouted, "It is finished!" It was not the cry of defeat, but of victory. Not only this, but the barrier of death is removed by Christ's death and Resurrection. By dying and going to Hades, He identified Himself completely with our condition, so that He could save us to the very end (Heb. 7:25). He tasted death for every man so that anyone who would believe in Him would never die (John 11:26). Death, man's formidable enemy, is now conquered by the death of God (Heb. 2:14-15). When the Author of Life (the Divine Person of the Son of God) suffered death in the flesh, it was not possible that death could hold Him captive (Acts 2:24). His divine nature could not suffer death. Therefore He rose victorious from the dead, raising our humanity with Him. This death was then a unique death. It was not the result of sin. Instead, it was the gift of God for the life of the world and its salvation. Death now become a bed of hope, a new birth to a better life.

Great is the Cross! But greater still is our God Who suffered on it for our salvation, and greatly to be praised! Let us in imitation of His great love for us, take up our cross and follow Him. Let us willingly suffer and sacrifice for others, just as He willingly laid down His life for us all. Let us forgive one another, just as He has forgiven us. Let us love one another even as He has loved us to the very end.

~ Fr. John Maxwell, Ft. Smith, AK

✘ Two things therefore does He here require, both to condemn ourselves for our sins, and to forgive others; ... and not merely to forgive with the lips, but from the heart.

-St. John Chrysostom

Quotable: "We can be communion with God every moment of our lives – in every detail of life, of our responsibilities, our relationships with others, every task we do whether at work, at home or in church. We can feel God's presence with us at all times, in every place."

Mother Christophora of Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Ellwood City, PA

"What is the purpose of monasticism? The power of a monk is prayer. This is the main function of the monks and nuns and their goal – making their entire lives a prayer to God. They are to develop and perfect their monastic life...Monastics are not to be involved in the life of the secular world. Instead they are totally concerned for the salvation of man who lives in the world. Their prayer is not self-centered but cosmo-centric. The monastery is not a place for the hopeless but for the called of Christ...In solitude our monks and nuns perfect their lives and encounter Christ."

Fr. John Psinka, PA

✘ An important person came from abroad to Scetis bringing much gold with him, and he asked the priest to give some of it to the brothers. The priest said, "The brothers do not need it," but as the other was very insistent, he put a basket filled with gold at the door of the church. The priest said, "Let anyone who needs it take some." But nobody came, and some did not even notice it was there. So the priest said to the visitor, "God has seen your charity: go, and give it to the poor." Greatly edified, the man went away.



Grant shows us how to make the sign of the Cross (4 steps)

Making the Sign of the Cross

Orthodox Christians often wear crosses on their bodies (e.g., on a chain or thong around the neck, or on a special pin), and trace the sign of the Cross on themselves during prayer, as a visible expression of their faith.

To make the sign of the Cross, use your right hand: Hold together the tips of your thumb, index finger, and middle finger, while bending your ring and pinky fingers against the palm of your hand. The first three fingers together express our faith in the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The two bent fingers show our belief in the two natures of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who was both perfect God (divine) and perfect Man (human).

When the Pharisees and the Saducees were testing Jesus Christ, to find out for themselves if He was the Son of God, a lawyer asked Him which is the greatest of the commandments. He answered, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." We remember this when we make the sign of the Cross!

With your hand in the special position, touch your forehead (for the mind), then your stomach (for body and soul*), then your right and left shoulders (for strength). Make your movements slow and deliberate, rather than quick and sloppy. Make sure to trace an upright Cross, rather than one that is distorted or upside down.

You can practice making the sign of the Cross together in front of a large mirror.

*Before the advent of modern medicine, philosophers and men of learning believed that the soul was centered in the abdomen, because it rumbled and churned when they were nervous or afraid. The Russian Psalter even uses the word for "womb" in its directions, according to Fr. Seraphim Slobodskoy, so there is no mistake! ✠ NTK

Compiled from *The Law of God* (pp. xiii, 23-24) and various postings to the OCA clergy listserve on the development of the sign of the Cross.

Using the Sign of the Cross Every Day

The sign of the Cross is a great way to sanctify or bring to God every part of your busy day — whether good or bad! Here are just a few times during the day when you might want to make the sign of the Cross:

- ✠ Before you get out of bed, to thank God for protecting you through the night.
- ✠ Before you prepare a meal for your family, to thank God for His bounty. (My grandmother Mary said a prayer and traced the sign of the Cross with the tip of her spoon whenever she opened a new sack of flour or sugar, opened a jar of jam or peanut butter, etc.)
- ✠ Before and after meals, to thank God for the bounty He provides.
- ✠ As you leave your home, to ask God to protect you on your journey and watch over your house or apartment while you are gone.
- ✠ When you pass an Orthodox church building or monastery, to ask God to preserve it and guide its leaders.
- ✠ As you bandage a "boo-boo" or take any kind of medicine, to ask that God will heal you both in body and spirit.

