

## The Sign of the Cross



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Used to give a blessing, invoke God’s help, or as a lead-in to other prayers, it could be referred to as “the autopilot prayer,” as we often say it without any thought whatsoever. In the early Church, instead of praying, “In the name of the Father,” it was sometimes prayed, “In the presence of the Father...” By praying “In the presence...,” it reminds us that we are already in God’s presence, and it becomes more meaningful. It is no longer “the autopilot prayer.” Moving on.

“In the name of the Father...” Throughout the centuries, religious tradition or folklore believed that knowing a person’s name gives one power or influence over them, as well as conveying intimacy. It was also said that a person’s name embodies the essence of the soul. Also, many healing services pray, “In the name of Jesus,” as there is power in His name.

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The physical gesture of the Sign of the Cross reminds us of Jesus' Crucifixion, which is to be remembered, not forgotten, because He rose from the dead. The Sign of the Cross is a frequent reminder of His love.

Catholic tradition teaches us to make the Sign of the Cross with an open palm. The Eastern Rite of the Church prays it with the thumb touching the first finger, the thumb and finger representing Jesus' two natures: human and divine. And the three fingers remind us of the Holy Trinity. Occasionally using this gesture helps further our goal of making prayer more meaningful. One final detail: Sometimes people pray a mini-Sign of the Cross by touching the forehead, chin, and cheeks.