

# Understanding the Mass

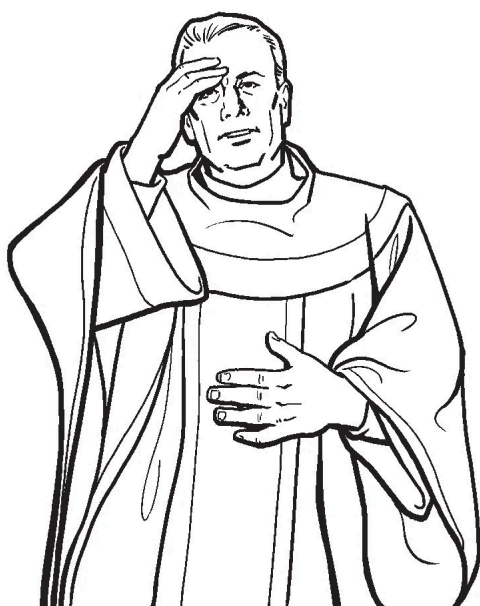
## Sign of the Cross

*Each week, we are explaining the different parts of the Mass - what is in the church, what we use in the Mass, and why (and how) we celebrate Mass the way we do.*

*Today our topic is the **Sign of the Cross**.*

The priest - along with the altar servers, acolytes, deacon and concelebrating priest (if they are present) - has entered the church and walked up to the altar. On reaching the altar, the priest has kissed it as a sign of reverence, of deep respect.

As all this happens, we stand as a sign of our own respect, and of our desire to praise God. We may also sing a hymn - a special song praising God.



Now the priest stands in front of all of us - the congregation - and begins the Mass by making the **Sign of the Cross**, saying the words: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit". And we all reply "Amen".

We make the Sign of the Cross to remind us of the Holy Trinity - of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Making the Sign of the Cross shows that we belong to God and that we know our lives should be shaped by God's plan for us.

We also make the Sign of the Cross to remember that Jesus died for love of us on the cross.

Cardinal Vincent Nicholas explains:

"The action of making the sign of the cross will help to focus our thoughts throughout the Mass.

When I touch my head, I know Mass is going to involve my thinking, my attention, my mind.

When I touch the place over my heart, it is a sign that my heart will be involved.

When I touch my shoulders, which are a source of strength, I know that I must put some effort into this.

So the Sign of the Cross tells me that this is going to involve my whole being throughout the Mass."

