

## Bulletin Article #1 = The Sign of the Cross

Most of these bulletin articles will be rather shorter and straight to the point, but today I wanted to give you a bit more background as we get started. We will not be able to cover every single part of the Mass throughout these next 52 weeks, but we will be able to go much more deeply into understanding so many of the prayers and gestures we participate in week after week. For example, we are already skipping over the entrance procession and the entrance antiphon (to name only two of the many we are skipping over), but one of the prayers and gestures to discuss and understand is the first prayer we make each and every Mass; ***the sign of the cross***. The sign of the cross developed into a common practice among early Christians throughout their daily lives such as the great early Church father and theologian Tertullian declares in the early 200s, "In all our travels and movements...we mark our foreheads with the sign of the cross." The cross went from the brutal method from the Romans of torture, humiliation, and execution, to being a common symbol and prayer to say and to trace upon your body for thousands and thousands of people who found faith, hope, and love in Jesus' death on the Cross for our sins.

The sign of the cross is even foreshadowed in the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel who encouraged the faithful people in Jerusalem to mark their foreheads, which seems to be the Hebrew letter *tahv* and would have appeared in the shape of an X or a cross (Ezekiel 9:4-6)! We call upon God's name as Jesus teaches us (see Matthew 28:19) and also remember our Baptism when we make this sign across our entire bodies, and finally, we ask God to be present with us and the power of His Cross to help us as well. St. John Chrysostom in the 300s summarizes this belief beautifully when he says, "Never leave your house without making the sign of the cross. It will be to you a staff, a weapon, an impregnable fortress...It has vanquished death, destroyed sin, emptied hell, dethroned Satan, and restored the universe. Would you then doubt its power?" This small prayer is something we can do and pray many times throughout our day, but it is the perfect way to begin the most important moment of our week; to launch us into the encounter of Christ during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass!