

into earth by his holy Incarnation, and from the earth into the left side, that is [hell](#), by his bitter Passion, and from thence into his Father's right side by his glorious Ascension".

The Sign of the Cross is not restricted to Roman Catholics and Orthodox, though its use is greater among these Christians. If you think Catholics cross themselves a lot, attending an Orthodox service reveals the faithful making the Sign of the Cross many times more, both as required by their liturgy and spontaneously. Lutherans retained the practice, as did the Anglican church, though in a reduced way. The retention of the Sign was one reason why the Puritans left the Church of England, the Puritans regarding it as superstitious and idolatrous. Today many High Anglicans cross themselves, while low church Anglicans more rarely do so. Ministers of other churches, e.g. Methodists and some reformed churches, use the sign in services, though it is less common as an individual practice in private prayer. Whatever the differences in form and usage between Catholics and Orthodox, both no doubt adhere to the opinion of St. Anthony Abbot (251-356): ***"The illusions of this world soon vanish, especially if a man arms himself with the Sign of the Cross. The devils tremble at the Sign of the Cross of our Lord, by which He triumphed over and disarmed them."*** -Stephen S

Entrance antiphon: I am the salvation of the people, says the Lord. Should they cry to me in any distress, I will hear them, and I will be their Lord for ever.

First Reading: Wisdom 2:12, 17-20

Responsorial Psalm: 53: The Lord upholds my life/R

Second Reading: James 3: 16-4:3

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! I am the light of the world, says the Lord, anyone who follows me will have the light of life. Alleluia!

Gospel: Mark: 9: 30-37

Memorial Acclamation: Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.

Communion Antiphon: You have laid down your precepts to be carefully kept; may my ways be firm in keeping your statutes.



Twenty Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B, 2024 Weekly

Reflection: The Sign of the Cross (2): Significance in the form of the Sign: In the first article I explained how the Sign of the Cross may be traced back to apostolic times

as a seal on the forehead and, later, sometimes the lips and breast. It evolved until, by the 9th century, the larger Sign of the Cross involving the forehead, breast and both shoulders had become widespread. From about the 5-6th centuries, Christians signed themselves using their first two fingers to witness to their belief in both the divine and human nature of Jesus. Within a couple of centuries, Eastern Christians began using the first 3 digits to symbolise the Trinity, the remaining two fingers folded back on the palm to represent Jesus' dual divinity and humanity. This 3 digit Sign was soon adopted in the Roman Church. By the 9th century it appears that Christians universally signed themselves in the same manner. This Sign of the Cross (a) used only the first 3 digits and (b) was made with the hand travelling from forehead to breast, then to the right and then the left shoulder. (a 'right cross'). This is how Orthodox Christians sign themselves to this day.

As late as the 12th-13th centuries many Roman pictures and sculptures still demonstrate 3 digits only being used. Yet Roman Catholics nowadays often use the whole open hand and always sign themselves with the hand touching the shoulders in reverse order - left shoulder first, followed by right shoulder (a 'left cross'). Pope Innocent III in the early 13th century required Catholics to sign themselves with the thumb and first two fingers extended, though permitting either a right or a left cross. It is not clear how the open hand left cross became the norm in the Catholic church, but it appears to have done so by the late 15th century. We find an explanation for the left cross in the 'Myroure of our Ladye', a devotional treatise used by the sisters of the Brigittine monastery of Sion at Isleworth during the 15th century: *"And then ye [bless](#) you with the sign of the holy cross. And in this blessing ye begin with your hand at the head downward, and then to the left side and believe that our Lord Jesu Christ came down from the head, that is from the Father*