

New and Corrected Translation of the Mass – Part 1

The Sign of the Cross

In the Name of the + Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Matt 28.19

After the introit or hymn, the Mass begins with these words, taken from the lips of Our Lord himself (cf. Mt 28.19). That God is a holy Trinity – three Divine Persons in one Divine Nature – is the heart of our faith. When we pray the Sign of the Cross, we confess that God has but one Name: and that one Name is *of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*. To Moses, God reveals his Name: ‘Say this to the sons of Israel, I AM has sent me to you’ (Ex 3.14). God’s Name is represented by the letters in Hebrew spelling YHWH, I AM WHO I AM, a Name we do not and cannot pronounce.

That Name becomes visible and pronounceable in Jesus. The angel says, ‘You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins’ (Matt 1.21; cf. Lk 1.31). Jesus, or in Hebrew, *Yehoshua* (Aramaic *Yeshua*), means ‘YHWH saves’. When St Paul says that God has bestowed on Jesus ‘a name which is above every other name’ and that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord (cf. Phil 2.9-11), he means that Jesus is YHWH.

God tells Ezekiel to put a mark on the forehead of those who sigh and groan over sins committed (cf. Ez 9). The mark is the Hebrew letter *tau*, which in Ezekiel’s time was written as a cross (+). St John sees a vision of an angel ‘with the seal of the living God’ who cries ‘Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads’ (Rev 7.3). This seal of the living God, like Ezekiel’s *tau*, is the Cross.

We make the Sign of the Cross with our right hands, with open palms, touching the tips of our fingers to our foreheads (*in the name of the Father*), then our chests or sternum (*and of the Son*), then our left shoulders (*and of the Holy*), and then our right shoulders (*Spirit*). This Sign professes our faith in the Trinity, orients us towards Christ’s Cross, and blesses us, strengthening and sanctifying us. We are asking God to purify our minds and our hearts, and to strengthen our shoulders for the yoke of Christ, indicating our willingness to pick up our cross and to follow the Lord (cf. Mk 8.34). It should be a dignified, large and deliberate gesture, not a hastily, sloppily executed and embarrassed one.

We make this sign either with five fingers held flat (in honour of the five wounds of Christ) or with the thumb, index and middle fingers conjoined (which symbolizes the unity of the Trinity). At the end we say ‘Amen’, *So be it*. So it is. This is our Faith, and we are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus our Lord.