

PARENT-CHILD ACTIVITY: THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

Teaching Young Children a Key Catholic Prayer and a Profound Mystery at the Very Root of the Church's Living Faith

During the Circle Time at the first ECFL Class of each new Session, I always begin by leading a Name Chant, welcoming each of the children by name to the group. Then I teach an eternal truth, a profound mystery and a deeply Catholic Prayer to children under five years of age, in less than 4 minutes! You can do this too. In fact, if you are a parent or a grandparent, I recommend that you do!



To do this, I use 3 props: a standing holy water font, a bottle of Holy Water and a Crucifix. I give the children a short explanation of each of these sacramentals (Parents are with their children in the Circle) and tell them that we always begin our prayer with a special sign—the Sign of the Cross.

I teach them this prayer, honoring the Blessed Trinity, step-by-step. After me, they touch their forehead, their tummy, one shoulder, the other shoulder and put their hands together for the Amen. And just like that, they have it mastered! It will take a lifetime to sound the

depths of this Blessing of ourselves, this Mystery of One God in Three Divine Persons at the very root of the Church's living faith as revealed by Jesus and expressed in the Creed.

But there they are, two years old and already deeply steeped in our Catholic Faith! I show them that we are forming a cross (Jesus is on the Cross) on our body. We are claiming ourselves for God. We are thinking of Jesus. We are being present to Him and we are receiving His strength in this little but very, very big prayer.

Children love rituals, they love to dip their fingers in the Holy water font and bless themselves. We repeat the Sign of the Cross (with Holy Water) at every Circle Time. Just as when I had my own toddlers and preschoolers at home and when I cared for my grandchildren, it was the little ones who reminded me as we passed by the Holy water font at the foot of the stairs.





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By Joanne Foley

They always loved and always remembered to dip their fingers in the Holy Water and bless themselves. What could be a better sign and better practice?

If you already have these three sacramentals in your home, be sure to teach your children this awesome prayer. If you do not yet have a crucifix, a Holy water font and some Holy water, now is a splendid time to get them. Now is a perfect time to bless your children, bless yourselves and to teach your children to bless themselves—and they will, every single time they pass by the Holy water font! A Great Blessing!