

# CONNECTIONS

Your Resource for Building a Strong Catholic Family

## The Sign of the Cross



Why do we make the Sign of the Cross when we say, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit"?

Making the Sign of the Cross may be the most common of all actions that we Catholics do. We make it when we begin and end our prayers; we make it when we enter and leave a church; we start each Mass with it; we may even make it when we hear the Name of the

Lord taken in vain or when we pass a church where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved.

In the Sign of the Cross, we profess the deepest mysteries of the Christian Faith: the Trinity--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit--and the saving work of Christ on the Cross. The combination of the words and the action are a creed, a statement of belief. We mark ourselves as Christians through the Sign of the Cross.

The Sign of the Cross also should remind us of our Baptism. We were all baptized "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" when water was poured over our head.

So, the next time you make the Sign of the Cross, talk about its meaning to your family and do not be afraid to use the Sign of the Cross in public.

## Suffering - "Offer It Up"



When people are going through any kind of hardship or struggle, a very Catholic thing to say is "offer it up." Well, why do we do that and how do we do that?

To offer up our suffering to Christ means to unite our suffering with His. By doing this, our suffering has redemptive value. It's not for nothing. Christ went through the cross before He saw the resurrection. The suffering we go through becomes our cross to bear before we are resurrected to new life.

**If we want to offer up our suffering but don't quite know what to say, here's a couple of examples:**

*Dear Lord, during this trial,  
I offer up to you my confusion  
Give me clarity  
I offer up to you my despair  
Give me hope  
I offer up to you my weakness  
Give me strength  
I offer up to you my pettiness  
Give me generosity of spirit.  
I offer up to you all my  
Negative thoughts from Satan  
So that when he asks "Where is Your God now?"  
I may respond "Right here with me, giving me His grace  
As a Heavenly beam of light penetrating your darkness!"  
Amen*

— OR —

*Dear Lord,  
Help me to remember in these troubled times  
The cross you carried for my sake,  
So that I may better carry mine  
And to help others do the same,  
As I offer up (Your concern or problem here) to You  
For the conversion of sinners  
For the forgiveness of sins  
In reparation for sins  
And for the salvation of souls. Amen*

Nobody in this life gets a "pass" when it comes to suffering. We all go through it at one time or another. Offering up our suffering and uniting it to Christ's suffering, makes us one with Him. It opens the channels of His grace to wash over us and help us in our time of need. It teaches us what love means.

### Symbol Key



**Prayer and Worship**

Understanding what happens at Mass and incorporating prayer into family life.



**Family (The Domestic Church)**

Incorporating Catholic customs and traditions into family life.



**Formation**

Fills in the holes of faith knowledge that may have missed growing up and highlights what makes Catholics distinct



**Charity and Service**

Highlights charity and service opportunities for the family within St. Francis Parish and the greater community.

# Charity and Service



“Each of us has a mission; each of us is called to change the world, to work for a culture of life, a culture forged by love and respect for the dignity of each human person.”  
Pope Benedict XVI, 9/8/10

One very special ministry at St. Francis is the Respect Life Committee. Their main mission takes Mary as its model in love, as they strive to change the world by working for a “culture of life”. In the current times in which we live, it is more important that ever to emphasize our commitment to upholding the dignity of all human life.

## Here are some activities families can be involved in:

### Prayer and Fasting Campaign:

Reclaim all Fridays, not just during Lent, as a time of prayer and fasting to continue our connection to the Passion of Christ and to help bear fruit in our parish community. Families can fast from popular culture by reading a bible story at dinner, turning off the TV or having a set “quiet” time where kids and parents can reflect on the week or say the Rosary. Check out the Respect Life Committee tab on the St. Francis Church website for more ideas and information about this campaign.  
[www.stfrancissherwood.org](http://www.stfrancissherwood.org)

Another area of life for families to be of service in is to “adopt” a member of the parish who is in need. Suggestions include reaching out to them at Mass and saying hello each week. After a while, maybe following up with a phone call to see how things are going or inviting them over for a meal. In essence, reaching out to and embracing a fellow parishioner. By doing this, families will experience the joy of giving and the joy of spreading the Gospel message of love of neighbor within our community.

# A Burden Shared is a Burden Lifted



At Easter, we celebrate the miracle of Christ’s resurrection. We acknowledge His sacrifice for our sins, and our reconciliation to the

Father through Him. Christ takes our burdens, and places them on His Cross. As Christians, we live to serve Christ and to be the example of His love to the world around us. But how can we possibly live up to the amazing sacrifice of Christ laying down His life for us?

The answer lies in the Cross. Christ takes our burdens on His Cross. So too, we can take the burdens of those we love, and place them on our Cross. Most of us won’t end up dying as a result of our sacrifice, but by sharing in our neighbor’s burdens, we are living up to our call to be Christ’s example to the world.

We can start within the walls of our homes. Is it possible that our spouse or one of our children has a burden that they have been carrying alone? We can take the time to sit and listen to them and offer them the unconditional love that Christ has given through the Cross. Sometimes, our advice will be of great help to them. Other times the simple act of listening will be enough. As we are listening, we can pray for discernment to know the appropriate response.

Like Christmas, the importance of Easter can get lost in all the commercialism of Easter Bunnies and dyed eggs. Sharing with our children the importance of Easter and the sacrifice made by Jesus is an important part of our Catholic tradition. More significantly, kids can be taught how to help share a burden facing their siblings, friends or even parents by praying for them (see the Prayer and Worship section for ideas), and/or doing a kind act.



### Mission Statement

The Strong Catholic Families initiative at St. Francis will provide support to help families pass on the traditions of the faith and share the love of Christ.

For more information visit:

<http://www.stfrancissherwood.org/>

(Go to: Faith Formation then Strong Catholic Families)



# WORD SEARCH

Find the hidden words Easter



- |        |           |
|--------|-----------|
| Amen   | Belongs   |
| Angles | Center    |
| Beat   | Hunger    |
| Blood  | Power     |
| Elders | Robes     |
| Eyes   | Salvation |
| Faces  | Saying    |
| Fell   | Serve     |
| Glory  | Shepherd  |
| God    | Spread    |
| Great  | Springs   |
| Honor  | Standing  |
| Lamb   | Strength  |
| Lead   | Temple    |
| Living | Thanks    |
| Loud   | Thirst    |
| Never  | Throne    |
| Night  | Voice     |
| Praise | Washed    |
| Tear   | Water     |
| Tent   | White     |
| Wipe   | Wisdom    |