

# Our Lady of Victories Church

(serving Harrington Park, River Vale and the Pascack/Northern Valley)

150 Harriot Avenue, Harrington Park, New Jersey

[www.ourchurch.com/member/o/olvparish](http://www.ourchurch.com/member/o/olvparish)

**Rev. Bryan F.J. Adamcik SFO, KHS Pastor**

Rev. Duverney Bermudez

Rev. Christopher M. Ciccarino KHS

Rev. Brian Muzás

*Weekend Assistants*

**Br. Innocent CFR**

Charles Niece

*Parish Seminarians*

**Sr. Kristen Gawlik FMA Novice**

*Parish Vocation*

Rev. Anthony Mastroeni

Rev. John O'Connor

*Latin Mass Assistants*

**Sr. Mary Corrigan, SC**

**Sr. Elizabeth Holler, SC**

*In Residence-Convent*

**Mr. Thomas Lagatol Mr. Albert McLaughlin**

*Deacons*

**Susan Evarella Betty Ann Niece**

*Religious Education*

**Deacon Al McLaughlin**

*Parish Catechetical Leader*

**Selena Piazza**

**Lesa Rossmann**

*Ministers of Music*

**Curtiss & Katie Stella**

*High School Ministry*

**Jorden Pedersen Esq.**

*President Parish Council*

**Elizabeth Ulisse**

**Martin Coyne II**

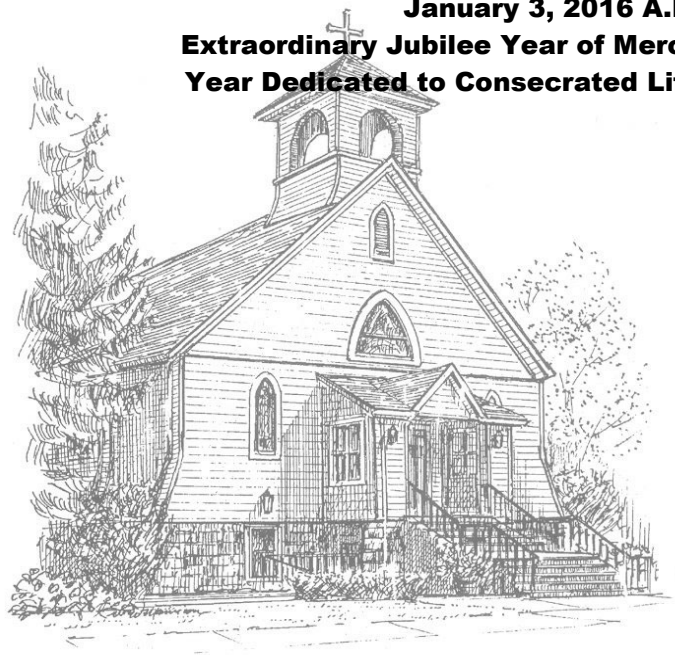
*Parish Trustees*

**Maria Hellrigel**

*Parish Secretary*

**Jon Fischer CFA**

*Chairman Finance Committee*



**January 3, 2016 A.D.**

**Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy**

**Year Dedicated to Consecrated Life**

## WELCOME

**To the Parish Family of  
OUR LADY OF VICTORIES  
(THE LITTLE CHURCH WITH THE BIG HEART)**

## COME WORSHIP WITH US

### Mass Schedule

**Saturday: 4:00pm & 5:00pm**

**Sunday: 7:30am, 9:30am, 10:45am,  
12:00pm, 6:00pm & 7:00pm**

**Latin Mass: Every Sunday at 8:15am**

**Weekdays: M-Sat 8:00am & 12:00noon**

### PARISH MEMBERSHIP:

All are welcome to become members of OLV Parish because we're the **little Church with the BIG HEART**. Please register in the Rectory. Every Catholic family or individuals living within the parish boundaries are encouraged to register.

### SPECIAL MASSES OR DEVOTIONS:

**First Friday:** 7:30pm, Mass of Sacred Heart & Devotions

**First Saturday:** 8:00am, Mass of Immaculate Heart of Mary

**First Saturday:** 12:00pm Mass for Souls in Purgatory

### Novenas prayed after 8:00 a.m. Mass:

**Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal:** Monday

**St. Jude and St. Anthony:** Wednesday

**Infant of Prague:** 25th of the month

**Rosary:** Recited M - Sat after 8:00am & 12Noon Mass.

**Tuesday-Novena Prayer and Adoration:** 2:00-3:00pm

**Thursday-Holy Hour with Adoration & Benediction:** 7:00pm

**Friday-Exposition & Adoration:** 12:30PM-3:00pm

**Nocturnal Adoration:** First Friday evening 8pm to Saturday 8am

### THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE/CONFESSION:

Monday - Friday 7:30am -7:50am. First Friday at 7:00pm

Saturday at 11:00a.m.-Noon; 3:00pm -3:25pm

### THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM:

To register for Baptismal preparation and Baptism, call the rectory.

### THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION:

Call the Religious Ed Office for requirements/class schedule.

### THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY:

Please call the rectory for an appointment.

### THE SACRAMENT OF THE SICK/LAST RITES:

Sick calls at any time in emergency.

### THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS AND VOCATIONS:

Anyone contemplating a vocation to the Priesthood or Religious Life should contact the Vocations Office at 973.497.4365.

**Phone:** 201-768-1706  
**Email:** [olvrectory.hp@gmail.com](mailto:olvrectory.hp@gmail.com)

**OLV Rectory**  
**OLV Fax**  
201-768-3962

**Religious Education**  
201-768-1400  
[olvhpccd@gmail.com](mailto:olvhpccd@gmail.com)

**OLV Convent**  
201-768-1705

## **PRAY FOR OUR SICK**

Please **PRAY** in the name of **JESUS**, the Healer, that the **SICK** of **OLV PARISH** may be restored to health and all those who **ASSIST** and **CARE** for the sick will be given the **STRENGTH** to continue **GOD'S GOOD WILL**: Baby Luca, little Niamh Devlin, Br. Pius, Isabella Ruggiero, Maria Aleman, Nicholas Biancola Jr, Kathleen Dolan, Thomas Haring, Arnold Kemner, Ken Mosier, Kathleen Musante, Dan Ragusa, Suzanne Rothschild, Wendy Ruggiero, Cookie Rush, Cynthia Simonelli, Mildred Speck, Therese Vaglio, Darien Wesler, Al Wiese, Roy Wurtz, Marian Zanetti, Elaine Zito.

## **SPIRITUAL EXCERPT**

"Be not proud of your works; for the judgments of God are different from the judgments of men; and often times that which displeases Him is what pleases men..."

**Thomas Kempis**, THE IMITATION OF CHRIST – Book 1.

## **NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED**

Stop in and visit Jesus in the Tabernacle. You can do it here at OLV Parish. Our Church is open from 7AM -4:30PM (M-F).

## **HOMEBOUND**

If you or anyone you know is homebound – even for a short duration of time - please contact the parish office so I or an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion can be scheduled to bring the Eucharist to the sick and homebound.

## **God knew our Greatest Need**

If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist. If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer. But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior.

## **OLV Scripture Study**

The OLV Scripture Study Group meets on Wednesdays at 10:00a.m. in the OLV Rectory. All are welcome to join us.

## **TODAY**

**M**y life is a gift of God given, not in years but a day at a time. Today is the day the Lord has made for me, and He planned it to be the most important day of my life. Yesterday is gone, never to return. I must not worry about it, but leave it in the hands of God. Tomorrow and all that it holds is God's secret and its coming is not assured. Only today is mine. Each day, arranged by God with infinite wisdom and goodness is His gift. His act of love for me. In thanksgiving I will offer him every day the gift of myself – my prayers, works, joys and sufferings. Dear Lord, receive it graciously.

## **JUST A REMINDER**

The Fridays of the year, outside of Lent, are designated as days of penance, but each individual may substitute for the traditional abstinence from meat some other practice of voluntary self-denial as penance.

"Just as we seek a doctor without any delay and hasten to apply remedies if some blow or wound comes over our body, so we should act with regard to the wounds of our souls."

**St. Caesarius of Arles**

## **It Didn't Work!**

Several years ago, the Catholic University of America introduced co-ed dorms. Those in favor claimed that the presence of the young women would lead to a significant improvement in male behavior. But instead, the rate of binge drinking shot up, with 41.5% of the students in co-ed dorms reporting weekly binge drinking, compared to just 17.6% in single-sex housing. This had massive add-on effects. Alcohol-related accidents are the leading cause of death for young adults, ages 17 to 24. Binge drinking students are 25 times more likely to do things like missing class, falling behind in school work, engaging in unplanned sexual activity, and getting in trouble with the law. These students also cause problems for others which include physical and sexual assault, as well as property damage. The rate of promiscuity also shot up. A study showed that 55.7% of the students in co-ed housing had a sexual partner in the last year, compared to 36.8% in single-sex dorms. Students in co-ed dorms are more than twice as likely to have had three or more sex partners. Young women who are sexually active are twice as likely to suffer from depression, than those who are not involved in sexual activity. The study also indicated that sexually active young men do more poorly in their academic work. The university is now in the process of a return to single sex accommodations.

## **The Unbreakable Chain**

It is told of a famous smith of medieval times that, having been taken prisoner and immured in a dungeon, he began to examine the chain that bound him with a view to discovering some flaw that might make it easier to break it. His hope was in vain, for he found from some marks upon it that it was his own workmanship, and it had been his boast that none could break a chain that he had forged. Thus it is with the sinner. His own hands have forged the chain that binds him, a chain that no human hand can break.

## **THE MOWER**

Pastor Sampson was making visitation rounds on his trusty bicycle, when he turned a corner and came upon a young boy trying to sell a lawn mower. "How much do you want for it?" Sampson asked. "I just need enough money to buy a bicycle," the boy explained. After a moment of thought, the preacher asked, "Will you take my bike in trade for it?" "Mister, you've got yourself a deal." The preacher took the mower and began to crank it. He pulled on the cord a few times with no reaction from the machine. The preacher called the boy over and said, "I can't get this mower to start." The little boy said, "My dad says you have to cuss at it to get it started." Pastor Sampson replied "I am a minister, and I cannot cuss. I have been saved for so long I don't even remember how to cuss." The little boy looked at him with a sparkle in his eye, "Just keep pulling on that cord, and it'll come back to you."

## **Jesus asked one thing from us!!!**

On His last night of earth (Holy Thursday) Jesus asked His disciples one thing – to stay awake with Him for one hour. Every Thursday evening we at OLV try to fulfill this request by having a Holy Hour from 7-8PM. Join us in carrying out Jesus' request.

## **Women's Dance Class—ZUMBA**

The women's Zumba exercise classes are held on Mondays 6:00PM in the gym and Thursdays 7:15PM in the Parish Center.

## **Search for Longest Married Couple in U.S.**

Worldwide Marriage Encounter is accepting nominations for the longest married couple in the United States. To nominate a couple, just send their names, wedding date, where they live and your contact information to [wmmelmc2015@gmail.com](mailto:wmmelmc2015@gmail.com). Nominations accepted until January 10, 2016. Winners will be announced February 2016 to celebrate Worldwide Marriage Day.

## Upcoming OLV Parish Events

- Jan 4—Mon – CCD
- Jan 4—Mon—Zumba 6:00PM
- Jan 5 -Tue – Marian Novena Prayer 2:15-3:15PM
- Jan 6—Wed—OLV Needlers
- Jan 8—Fri– Adoration from 12:30PM-4:00PM
- Jan 9 - Sat—Confessions 11:00-12:00noon 3:00-3:25PM
- Jan 9—Sat—HS Youth Ministry
- Jan 17– Sat—First Confessions
- Jan 23—Sat—K of C Beef Steak
- May 14—Sat- FIRST HOLY COMMUNION
- May 22—Sun—Confirmation 2PM
- May 30—Mon—Fr. Innocent CFR First Mass & Reception at OLV-1PM

## **THANK YOU!**

To our Choir and the musicians who provided the beautiful Christmas hymns at Mass, to the ladies who cleaned the church and arranged the flowers: Phyllis Donohue, Marie Flahive, Anita Garzino, Mary Gormley, Diane Koch, Peggy O'Brien, Mary Ann Torre, Jeanne Marie Walsh and Linda Wayne; Mrs. Niece and our youth who decorated the church: Matt Brady, Matt Coyne, James Davies, Maryrose Evanella, Thomas Evanella, Luke Fizulich, Owen Fizulich, Owen O'Neill, Jacob Smith, Zachary Smith, Caroline Sommers.

## **SAINT MOTHER TERESA**

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Mother Teresa, the tiny, stooped nun who cared for the poorest of the poor in the slums of India and beyond, will be declared a saint next year after Pope Francis approved a miracle attributed to her intercession. The Vatican on Friday set no date for the canonization, but it is widely believed that it will take place in the first week of September to coincide with the 19th anniversary of Mother Teresa's death and during Francis' Holy Year of Mercy.

"With her work, she was always the symbol of mercy, not just with words but with her actions," said the superior general of Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity, the Rev. Sebastian Vazhakala. The Vatican said Francis approved a decree attributing a miracle to Mother Teresa's intercession during an audience with the head of the Vatican's saint-making office on Thursday, his 79th birthday.

The miracle in question concerned the inexplicable cure of a Brazilian man suffering from a viral brain infection that resulted in multiple abscesses. By Dec. 9, 2008, he was in a coma and dying, suffering from an accumulation of fluid around the brain. The Rev. Brian Kolodiejchuk, the postulator spearheading Mother Teresa's canonization case, said in a statement Friday that 30 minutes after the man was due to undergo surgery, he sat up, awake and without pain. The surgery did not take place and a day later the man was declared to be symptom-free. The Vatican later attributed the cure to the fervent prayers to Mother Teresa's intercession by the man's wife, who at the time of his scheduled surgery was at her parish church praying alongside her pastor. "This is fantastic news. We are very happy," said Sunita Kumar, a spokeswoman for the Missionaries of Charity in the eastern city of Kolkata (earlier called Calcutta), where Mother Teresa lived and worked.

Mother Teresa won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 for her work with Calcutta's destitute and ill — work which continued even after she herself became sick. She died on Sept. 5, 1997, at age 87.

## **HOW TO ANSWER ABORTION ADVOCATES**

I am pro-choice, not pro-abortion. The "pro-choice" position always overlooks the victim's lack of any freedom to choose. Women do not choose to be raped, African-Americans did not choose to be enslaved, Jews did not choose the gas chambers and babies do not choose to be killed by abortion.

## **THE NIGHT OF CHRISTMAS**

A priest told me what happened to him once in his first parish. After the Midnight Mass on Christmas Day, he personally locked the church. With the keys in his pocket, he went to his room and had a good sleep. At 7:30, he got up and went back to church intending to have one hour of prayer all to himself. He opened the side door leading to the sacristy, turned a light on and then turned on a couple of lights for the church. As he opened the sacristy door and walked into the church, he literally froze. Most of the pews were occupied by strange people clad in the poorest of clothes and all were in total silence. No one so much as wiggled and nobody cared to look at him. A small group was standing by the Nativity scene contemplating the manger in total silence. The priest recovered quickly and in a loud voice asked them how did they get in? Nobody answered. He walked closer to them and asked again who let them in? A woman answered totally unconcerned: "Strange things happen on the night of Christmas." And back to total silence. The priest went to check the main door and found it locked just as he had left it. He was now determined to get the facts and turned his face to the pews, but the pews were empty. The people had vanished. He kept this puzzle to himself for some time. Unable to hold it any longer, he told me just what I have told you. Could I help with any plausible explanation? Let me hurry to say that the priest in question is a model of sanity and is as well educated academically as most of the priests I know, if not better.

My explanation was and still is as follows: Those were dead people who were doing their purgatory, or part of it, in the church. It is safe to assume that we atone for our sins where we committed them. Those people were immersed in total silence. Why? Consider the irreverences committed before the Blessed Sacrament; how many people act in Church: chatting, giggling, looking around. After Mass, some people gather in small groups around the pews and turn the church into a market place with no regard for Christ's Real Presence in the Tabernacle. Why did they vanish? They did not vanish. They simply became invisible; but they remained tied to their pews, unable to utter one single word to atone for their disrespectful chatter while living. The Blessed Sacrament is no laughing matter. There is a price tag to all we do or say. In the end, it is God who gets the last laugh — so to say. Those people had to give the Blessed Sacrament the adoration and respect that Christ deserves. For how long? Only God can answer that. Why did the priest see them? So he could pray for them and for all the other poor souls detained in other churches. Why other priests do not see those people? Well, perhaps they already know the theory that souls can be detained in churches as well as anywhere else, so they do not need a miracle.

Why were they clad in such poor clothes? To atone for their vanity while living. People often use clothes not so much to cover their nakedness, but as a status symbol to impress others. But, God is not impressed by, say, mink coats. Also, people walk into church with hardly any clothes. In the summer months it is not unusual for people — mostly women — to go to receive Holy Communion in the most indecent clothing. The pastor may or may not put up with it; but, God will have His day in court about this. Rags would be an appropriate punishment for these excesses.

Segundo Liorente, SJ.

## **A Daily Prayer**

**O God these hands, take them for they are Thine,  
 For I am but the branch and Thou the Vine,  
 This heart, make it pulse with Thine own heartbeat,  
 Take O Lord and nail it to Thy bleeding feet!  
 This mind, dark with the weight of sin,  
 Brighten, and let Thy light shine in,  
 And make of me, Adam's heir, A kin to Thee, Heaven's share.  
 By Monsignor Thomas J. Gillhooly**

**PRIESTS**

The U.S. bishops' report as of January 1, 2012, reveals 39,718 priests, compared to the peak of 59,803 in 1963. The U.S. faithful have increased from 43.9 million in 1963 to 69.1 million in 2012. The decline in the number of priests reflects a change from 776 faithful per priest to 1740 faithful per priest. In 1952 the ratio was 661 faithful per priest. The number of U.S. seminarians peaked at 48,992 in 1965, but is now below 6000 seminarians annually during the past 20 years. It is calculated that there will be approximately 30,000 U.S. priests in 2032, while the faithful will number close to 90 million, meaning 3000 faithful per priest. U.S. religious sisters peaked at 177,154 in 1963, and today they number 55,045. Worldwide, priests numbered 432,247 in 1963 and today number 412,236, while the number of religious sisters declined from 1.01 million to 721,935. The statistical status in Europe reveals 190,150 priests in 2012 and 274,818 in 1963. European sisters numbered 578,327 in 1963 and 286,042 sisters in 2012. The papally approved canonical Catholic solution exists in Slovakia and Ukraine. From 1945 to 1989, Slovakia's priesthood was decimated by the Soviet regime. However, within 20 years after the Soviet atheist communists departed, every parish church building was recovered and each parish had at least one Catholic priest. Now, the seminaries are overflowing and there are two vocations for each opening. Today Slovakia exports missionary priests from the oversupply of priests.

**SAVE THE DATE****JANUARY 23, 2016****OLV Knights of Columbus Council 14483****SIXTH ANNUAL "Hap Nightingale"****BEEFSTEAK DINNER**

If you would like to be a placemat sponsor \$25 at the event—contact Allan Napolitano Sr. at 201-784-8862.

**QUESTION:**

Are Catholics still required to fast prior to reception of Holy Communion? The General Rule is that Catholics should fast for one hour from solid food and beverages, with the exception of water, before going to Holy Communion. The period of fast is reduced for those who are sick, in the hospital, advanced in age and for those caring for them.

**SNOW**

One winter morning a husband and wife in southern Winnipeg were listening to the radio during breakfast. They heard the announcer say, "We are going to have 8 to 10 inches of snow today. You must park your car on the even-numbered side of the street, so the snowplows can get through." So the good wife went out and moved her car. A week later while they are eating breakfast again, the radio announcer said, "We are expecting 10 to 12 inches of snow today. You must park your car on the odd-numbered side of the street, so the snowplows can get through." The good wife went out and moved her car again. The next week they are again having breakfast, when the radio announcer says, "We are expecting 12 to 14 inches of snow today. You must park..." Then the electric power went out. The good wife was very upset, and with a worried look on her face she said, "Honey, I don't know what to do. Which side of the street do I need to park on so the snowplows can get through?" With the love and understanding in his voice that all men who are married to Blondes exhibit, the husband replied, "Why don't you just leave it in the garage this time?"

**Mass Intentions****Monday, January 4—St. Elizabeth Ann Seton of the USA**

8:00 Edward Affolter R/b the Faivre Family  
12:00 John Zanetti R/b Joseph and Mary Ceccon

**Tuesday, January 5—St. John Neumann, US Bishop**

8:00 Mary Turnbull R/b Rita McNamara  
12:00 Intentions of Charles and Marita Morgan  
R/b Anthony and Marylene D'Jamoos

**Wednesday, Jan. 6—Bl. Andre Bessette of Quebec-Religious Brother**

8:00 Kevin O'Brien R/b Richard and Mary C. O'Brien  
12:00 Marie Falotico R/b Dennis and Kathleen Falotico

**Thursday, January 7 – St. Raymond of Peñafort**

8:00 William P. and Lucy Desmond R/b the Desmond Family  
12:00 Marylou Casey R/b the Oakley Family

**Friday, January 8 – St. Apollinaris, Bishop**

8:00 Brice Rowland R/b Jeanne Marie Walsh  
12:00 Thomas Kelly R/b Joe Tobia and Family

**Saturday, January 9– St. Adrian of Canterbury, Abbot**

8:00 Martin Ryan R/b Rob and Vicky Nicolich  
12:00 Anthony Mongelli Sr. R/b Margaret Brandes  
4:00 Nick and Frances Sita R/b Barbara Sita  
5:00 Arthur Monteverde Sr. R/b Pat Halligan

**Sunday, January 10—The Baptism of the Lord**

7:30 June Porto—1st Anniversary R/b the Kozak Family  
8:15 Robert Salvatori R/b Marita Morgan  
9:30 Members of Holy Name Society, Living and Deceased  
10:45 Daniel Maddaloni R/b Peter and Eileen Kruimer  
12:00 David Zocco R/b Mike Zocco  
6:00 Helen White R/b Chris and Mary Oakes and Chris Kelly  
7:00 Vincent Alluzzo R/b Kevin and Susan Olsen

**Sanctuary Memorials**

**The Sanctuary Lamp** burns this week for the repose of the soul of **Patriocino Bonzon**, r/b Esty Parlanti.

**The Blessed Virgin Mary Votive Lamp** burns this week for the repose of the soul of **Michael Giotta**, r/b the Giotta Family.

**The St. Joseph Votive Lamp** burns this week for the repose of the soul of **Orlando Parlanti**, r/b Esty Parlanti.

**OPINIONS**

On the first day of school, a first-grader handed his teacher a note from his mother. The note read, "The opinions expressed by this child are not necessarily those of his parents..."

**Learning in Utero**

Science Daily reported in January that "newborns are much more attuned to the sounds of their native language than first thought. In fact, these linguistic whizzes can pick up on the distinctive sounds of their mother tongue while in utero, a new study has concluded. "We have known for over 30 years that we begin learning prenatally about voices by listening to the sound of our mother talking," said Christine Moon, a professor of psychology at Pacific Lutheran University. "This is the first study that shows we learn about the particular speech sounds of our mother's language before we are born. This study moves the measurable result of experience with individual speech sounds from 6 months of age to before birth."

**THE SIGN OF THE CROSS**

**T**he Sign of the Cross is a simple gesture, yet a profound expression of faith for both Catholic and Orthodox Christians. As Catholics, it's something we do when we enter a church, after we receive Communion, before meals, and every time we pray. But what exactly are we doing when we make the Sign of the Cross? Here are 21 things:

1. Pray. We begin and end our prayers with the Sign of the Cross, perhaps not realizing that the sign is itself a prayer. If prayer, at its core, is "an uprising of the mind to God," as St. John Damascene put it, then the Sign of the Cross assuredly qualifies. "No empty gesture, the sign of the cross is a potent prayer that engages the Holy Spirit as the divine advocate and agent of our successful Christian living," writes Bert Ghezzi.
2. Open ourselves to grace. As a sacramental, the Sign of the Cross prepares us for receiving God's blessing and disposes us to cooperate with His grace, according to Ghezzi.
3. Sanctify the day. As an act repeated throughout the key moments of each day, the Sign of the Cross sanctifies our day. "At every forward step and movement, at every going in and out, when we put on our clothes and shoes, when we bathe, when we sit at table, when we light the lamps, on couch, on seat, in all the ordinary actions of daily life, we trace upon the forehead the sign," wrote Tertullian.
4. Commit the whole self to Christ. In moving our hands from our foreheads to our hearts and then both shoulders, we are asking God's blessing for our mind, our passions and desires, our very bodies. In other words, the Sign of the Cross commits us, body and soul, mind and heart, to Christ. (I'm paraphrasing this Russian Orthodox writer.) "Let it take in your whole being—body, soul, mind, will, thoughts, feelings, your doing and not-doing—and by signing it with the cross strengthen and consecrate the whole in the strength of Christ, in the name of the triune God," said twentieth century theologian R. Guardini.
5. Recall the Incarnation. Our movement is downward, from our foreheads to our chest "because Christ descended from the heavens to the earth," Pope Innocent III wrote in his instructions on making the Sign of the Cross. Holding two fingers together—either the thumb with the ring finger or with index finger—also represents the two natures of Christ.
6. Remember the Passion of Our Lord. Fundamentally, in tracing out the outlines of a cross on ourselves, we are remembering Christ's crucifixion. This remembrance is deepened if we keep our right hand open, using all five fingers to make the sign—corresponding to the Five Wounds of Christ.
7. Affirm the Trinity. In invoking the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we are affirming our belief in a triune God. This is also reinforced by using three fingers to make the sign, according to Pope Innocent III.
8. Focus our prayer on God. One of the temptations in prayer is to address it to God as we conceive of Him—the man upstairs, our buddy, a sort of cosmic genie, etc. When this happens, our prayer becomes more about us than an encounter with the living God. The Sign of the Cross immediately focuses us on the true God, according to Ghezzi: "When we invoke the Trinity, we fix our attention on the God who made us, not on the God we have made. We fling our images aside and address our prayers to God as he has revealed himself to be: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."
9. Affirm the procession of Son and Spirit. In first lifting our hand to our forehead we recall that the Father is the first person the Trinity. In lowering our hand we "express that the Son proceeds from the Father." And, in ending with the Holy Spirit, we signify that the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, according to Francis de Sales.
10. Confess our faith. In affirming our belief in the Incarnation, the crucifixion, and the Trinity, we are making a sort of mini-confession of faith in words and gestures, proclaiming the core truths of the creed.
11. Invoke the power of God's name. In Scripture, God's name carries power. In Philippians 2:10, St. Paul tells us that "at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth." And, in John 14:13-14, Jesus Himself said, "And whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it."

12. Crucify ourselves with Christ. Whoever wishes to follow Christ "must deny himself" and "take up his cross" as Jesus told the disciples in Matthew 16:24. "I have been crucified with Christ," St. Paul writes in Galatians 2:19. "Proclaiming the sign of the cross proclaims our yes to this condition of discipleship," Ghezzi writes.

13. Ask for support in our suffering. In crossing our shoulders we ask God "to support us—to shoulder us—in our suffering," Ghezzi writes.

14. Reaffirm our baptism. In using the same words with which we were baptized, the Sign of the Cross is a "summing up and re-acceptance of our baptism," according to then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.

15. Reverse the curse. The Sign of the Cross recalls the forgiveness of sins and the reversal of the Fall by passing "from the left side of the curse to the right of blessing," according to de Sales. The movement from left to right also signifies our future passage from present misery to future glory just as Christ "crossed over from death to life and from Hades to Paradise," Pope Innocent II wrote.

16. Remake ourselves in Christ's image. In Colossians 3, St. Paul uses the image of clothing to describe how our sinful natures are transformed in Christ. We are to take off the old self and put on the self "which is being renewed ... in the image of its creator," Paul tells us. The Church Fathers saw a connection between this verse and the stripping of Christ on the cross, "teaching that stripping off our old nature in baptism and putting on a new one was a participation in Christ's stripping at his crucifixion," Ghezzi writes. He concludes that we can view the Sign of the Cross as "our way of participating in Christ's stripping at the Crucifixion and his being clothed in glory at his resurrection." Thus, in making the Sign of the Cross, we are radically identifying ourselves with the entirety of the crucifixion event—not just those parts of it we can accept or that are palatable to our sensibilities.

17. Mark ourselves for Christ. In ancient Greek, the word for sign was sphragis, which was also a mark of ownership, according to Ghezzi. "For example, a shepherd marked his sheep as his property with a brand that he called a sphragis," Ghezzi writes. In making the Sign of the Cross, we mark ourselves as belong to Christ, our true shepherd.

18. Soldier on for Christ. The sphragis was also the term for a general's name that would be tattooed on his soldiers, according to Ghezzi. This too is an apt metaphor for the Christian life: while we can be compared to sheep in the sense of following Christ as our shepherd we are not called to be sheepish. We instead are called to be soldiers of Christ. As St. Paul wrote in Ephesians 6, "Put on the armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the devil. ... take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

19. Ward off the devil. The Sign of the Cross is one of the very weapons we use in that battle with the devil. As one medieval preacher named Aelfric declared, "A man may wave about wonderfully with his hands without creating any blessing unless he make the sign of the cross. But, if he do, the fiend will soon be frightened on account of the victorious token." In another statement, attributed to St. John Chrysostom, demons are said to "fly away" at the Sign of the Cross "dreading it as a staff that they are beaten with." (source the Catholic Encyclopedia.)

20. Seal ourselves in the Spirit. In the New Testament, the word sphragis, mentioned above, is also sometimes translated as seal, as in 2 Corinthians 1:22, where St. Paul writes that, "the one who gives us security with you in Christ and who anointed us is God; he has also put his seal upon us and given the Spirit in our hearts as a first installment." In making the Sign of the Cross, we are once again sealing ourselves in the Spirit, invoking His powerful intervention in our lives.

21. Witness to others. As a gesture often made in public, the Sign of the Cross is a simple way to witness our faith to others. "Let us not then be ashamed to confess the Crucified. Be the Cross our seal made with boldness by our fingers on our brow, and on everything; over the bread we eat, and the cups we drink; in our comings in, and goings out; before our sleep, when we lie down and when we rise up; when we are in the way, and when we are still," wrote St. Cyril of Jerusalem.

## **COVER SHEET**

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