

# TRINITY NEWS

WEEK 36.  
September 03, 2023  
Proper 17

## *Revisiting the Notes on the Liturgy*

### **The Sign of the Cross.**

**H**umans communicate through body language almost as much as they do through speech and body language includes among other things, gestures, like waving, saluting, high-fiving, thumbs-upping, clapping and making the Sign of the Cross.

When you think of it this way, it's easy to see how making the Sign of the Cross is a bodily prayer, a prayer to God, the Holy Trinity, to be present, whether we make the Sign ourselves ('cross' ourselves) or whether it's make over us by a priest or bishop.

In the Liturgy it can be way of responding, a sort of bodily Amen, for example as when we make the Sign of the Cross at the words "Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the Lord," or "Sanctify us also, that we may faithfully receive..." (Rite I – "be filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction") and in response to the priest's blessing at then end of the service. At the proclamation we sign our forehead, lips and breast as a prayer to receive it in our minds, proclaim it with our lips, and guard it forever in our hearts.

But making the Sign of the Cross is not confined to liturgical settings any more than other forms of prayer. Many make it first thing in the morning and before turning off the lights at night, before and after they pray in language, or anywhere and any time that they reach out to God.

The Sign of the Cross is one of the most ancient of Christian practices; we know that it was in use by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century throughout the Church and was pretty much universal. It is still universal in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, and widely used among Anglicans and Lutherans.

*To page 2*



All problems carry the key to their solution in their own pockets.

*Charles Henry Brent, 1918*



## **SAINTS OF THE WEEK:**

**Gregory the Great, 3 September.** Gregory was born in 540, the son of a Roman senator. As a young man he pursued a governmental career, and in 573 was made Prefect of the city of Rome. Following the death of his father, he resigned his office, sold his inheritance, and became a monk. In 579 he was sent by the Pope to Constantinople to be his representative to the Patriarch. He returned to Rome in 586, and was himself elected Pope in 590. At a time of political turmoil, Gregory proved an astute administrator and diplomat, securing peace with the Lombards. He initiated the mission to England, sending Augustine and forty monks from his own monastery to refound the English Church. His writings were pastorally oriented. His spirituality was animated by a dynamic of love and desire for God. Indeed, he is sometimes called the 'Doctor of desire'. For Gregory, desire was a metaphor for the journey into God. As Pope, he styled himself 'Servant of the servants of God' -- a title which typified both his personality and ministry. He died in 604.

**The Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 8 September.** This festival in honour of the birth of the mother of our Lord is celebrated on this day in both the eastern and the western Churches. Falling just nine months after the feast of the Conception of Mary, this feast acknowledges the preparation by God of his people to receive their Saviour and Lord, putting 'heaven in ordinary' and showing that mortal flesh can be the bearer of Christ to the world.

### *From page 1*

On the practical side, the Sign of the Cross is made in the Western Church with the thumb and two fingers (symbolizing the Holy Trinity) touching first the forehead, then the chest, the left shoulder and finally the right shoulder. In the Eastern Church, the right shoulder comes first then the left.

Making the Sign of the Cross is, of course, not mandatory, and one should be made to feel it is. But it is another way of praying with your body, of participating actively with what's going on at the altar, and of signaling to the world your allegiance to Christ.