

Lesson 6 - The Wisdom of Catholicism

1. How do people outside the Catholic Tradition identify a person as Catholic?

Answer: Traditions that identify a person as Catholic is the sign of the cross and the use of holy water.

2. What is a sign of the cross?

Answer: The sign of the cross, is a symbolic gesture having profound meaning and is used:

- in both personal and communal prayer.
 - In personal prayer, the believer forms the image of the cross by reverently touching the forehead, chest and shoulders.
 - In communal prayer, the priest often blesses the gathered believers by tracing the cross in the air.
- in other ways as well. For e.g., in the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, the priest traces the cross on the sick person's forehead and hands.

3. What does the sign of the cross express?

Answer: The sign of the cross expresses two very fundamental beliefs of Catholic Christians:

- Catholics believe in the **Holy Trinity**; the central Christian dogma or teaching is that in the one God three divine persons exist – God the Father, Jesus the Christ, and the Holy Spirit.
 - Each is distinct, yet the three are totally united to be **One God**.
 - The Trinity reflects that God is a community of love and we too are called to live together in a community of faith.
- The sign of the cross expresses the faith that Jesus' death on the cross, along with his Resurrection from the dead by his Father, **redeemed humanity from the power of sin** and marked the turning point of history.

4. What Does It Mean To Be Catholic?

Answer: To be a Catholic means to be:

- ▶ Universal (it does not recognize national or ethnic boundaries – committed to proclaiming Jesus to all people in all cultures and at all times)
- ▶ Sacramental (use of symbols and signs)
- ▶ Thinking people (questions and seek answers)
- ▶ To accept both Scripture and Tradition (studied and handed down)
- ▶ We are One and Many (the church is an assembly of people who possess one faith, one baptism, are guided by one Spirit, and celebrate one Lord).
- ▶ We are historical (authorities have been passed down by Jesus through Peter and thereafter through the Pope).
- ▶ We have a shared leadership (all members of the church – priests, religious and laypeople – lead on many levels in the local church)
- ▶ We are a Communion of Saints – (includes all baptized Christians both the faithful on earth and the dead - the souls in purgatory, angels and saints in Heaven).
- ▶ We are committed to Justice (concerned about people who are in need or ignored or pushed to the margins of a full human life – teaching, orphanage etc).