

## Liturgy Lesson: Sign of the Cross and Greeting

The greeting *Dominus Vobiscum* spoken by the priest, followed by the people's response, *Et cum spiritu tuo*, is older than the Sign of the Cross. In our English celebration it is translated, *The Lord be with you*, followed by the people's *And also with you*. In the new translation which we will begin using this fall we will be using a more literal translation with the priest saying *The Lord be with you*, followed by the people's response *And with your spirit*.

The late Cardinal Bernadin said this about the Sign of the Cross:

*The Sign of the Cross should be made with reverence and attention. By this simple gesture we identify ourselves as Christians. This sign marked us even before baptism and will mark us even after death.*

The Cardinal might have added that the Sign of the Cross is unique to Catholics. The only other Christians who make the Sign of the Cross are the Orthodox, who make it differently. As we begin the celebration of Mass, perhaps we should ask ourselves if we consciously make that gesture or do we just do it mechanically? The same could be said about the greeting. Do we just go through the motions? Or do they Sign of the Cross and Greeting help us to enter into and celebrate the Mass as a community of believers? For this to happen, all the prayers we offer at our celebrations of Eucharist need to be offered thoughtfully.