I want you to think for a moment if you ever give any thought to the sign of the cross. When I was writing this homily, I asked myself the same question and soon realized that the sign of the cross in my prayer life has simply become a habit, and I can’t remember ever giving any serious thought to one of the most recognizable gestures and prayers that we have as Catholics. It’s one of our most common prayers, one of our most powerful prayers, yet at the same time one of our most taken for granted prayers - used simply to ‘log on’ and ‘log off’ of our prayer time.

This is Trinity Sunday, the feast day when we celebrate and reflect on the great mystery of the Holy Trinity. It is a mystery because we believe that there is only one God, but we experience him through 3 distinct persons of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One of my priest friends compares the Trinity to Neopolitan ice cream – 3 distinct flavours, yet still just 1 wonderful ice cream! I sure hope God won’t be mad at me for comparing him to a frozen desert…

Today’s readings illuminate the unfolding of the revelation of the Trinity. Moses tells us in the first reading how God revealed himself initially to the Israelites through ‘signs and wonders’, however this wasn’t enough – God wanted us to get to know him better, and therefore revealed himself more fully to us through his Son. Through Jesus’ teachings, actions, and sacrificial offering on the cross, God fully reveals to us his divine nature through Christ’s human nature. And completing the trifecta, he continues to reveal himself to us even now through his Holy Spirit which we celebrated last Sunday at Pentacost, who acts intimately within each and every believer as St. Paul explains in the second reading, allowing us to become God’s adoptive sons and daughters. And in the Gospel, Jesus fully reveals the doctrine of the Trinity as he commands the apostles to baptize in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

And it’s this great mystery that makes us different from all other faiths. We believe that God loves us so much that he has revealed to us his nature in three persons so that we can know him more fully, making it easier for us to grow closer to him and reciprocate his love. He could have remained a distant God, and not revealed anything further about himself than what he revealed to Moses – but this would have kept us at a distance. Instead, he humbled himself to become human in order to relate to us in human terms and to suffer for us the consequences of sin. Not ending there, he also continues to reveal himself to us through the Holy Spirit which Christ promises in the Gospel will remain with us always.

Which brings us back to the sign of the cross. Each time we make this gesture, we profess our belief in the Trinity. We open and close all of our prayers with this sign of our faith, and it is indeed a prayer in itself, since each time we make this act of reverence, we invoke the name of our triune God. It’s a gesture we tend to take for granted, but given what it signifies we shouldn’t take it lightly. It not only clearly identifies us as Christians, but is also a profound act of reverence, a reminder of our baptism, a prayer of trust in God’s infinite love, as well as an oath of belief in our Trinitarian God.

And even within the action, much is being said. The symbol of the cross itself is the foundation of our faith, signifying our belief in salvation through Christ’s sacrifice. Even the motion of the hand coming down reminds us of the Father sending the Son down from heaven to earth, as well as the descent of the Holy Spirit into our lives. And then the hand moving from left to right reminds us that we have been delivered from death to new life. The sign of the cross therefore is no lightweight prayer – but rather a profound act of faith.

If you take nothing else away from this homily, I hope that you do take this away – that each time you make the sign of the cross, you remember that this is more than just a pious action – it is an intimate prayer, as well as a deep act of faith which should be done often, and with reverence toward our loving God who deserves all glory, honour, and praise. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.