

## Making the Sign of the Cross During the Divine Liturgy — OCA / Russian / Slavic Style

Part of the Liturgy	When to Make the Sign of the Cross (OCA/Russian/Slavic Style)	Explanation / Historical Note
Entering the Church	Upon entering the narthex; thrice (three times in succession) with bows; before/after venerating icons (kiss the hand, bow).	Shows respect to the sacred space; rooted in Russian piety (e.g., per 16th-century Stoglav Council emphasizing careful gestures). No cross if hurried — better none than careless.
Preparation / Proskomide (observed indirectly)	Typically not by laity; if visible and priest blesses gifts with cross, optional single sign.	Priest signs over bread/wine; laity may cross if submitting names, but restrained in Slavic practice to avoid excess.
Opening Blessing	At "Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit..." — single sign.	Priest blesses with the Gospel (an object), so laity cross once. 4th-century tradition limits signs to key moments.
Litanies / Petitions	At end of each litany when deacon/priest says "For Thine is the glory..." (or similar closure); at every "Lord, have mercy."	Echoes early communal prayer; OCA custom: sign only for closure petitions, maintaining sobriety per rubrics and avoiding "pietistic excess" (19th–20th century reforms). Bow during litanies.
Small / Lesser Entrance	When priest elevates Gospel and says "Wisdom, arise!" — single sign.	Symbolizes Christ's light; Gospel is elevated in persecuted eras; Slavic minimalism: one reverent sign.
Trisagion Hymn	At the beginning of the first "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal..." — 1 sign only; not for each repetition.	Trinitarian hymn sung thrice (once for each Person); OCA custom signs once at the start of your personal experience of the hymn. 5th-century adoption after vision during earthquake in Constantinople.
Epistle / Gospel Reading	Before the Gospel (when deacon/priest says "Eulogison"; when he censes); after the Gospel book is kissed.	Reverence for Scripture; early Christians signed forehead for enlightenment. No sign during the reading itself.
Sermon / Homily	Optionally at end if priest uses the cross (but bow if he blesses).	Not always historical (pre-catechumen dismissal); OCA practice: sign only if blessing is given.
Cherubic Hymn / Great Entrance	When priest processes with gifts through nave (chalice/paten pass); single sign.	Represents Christ's path to Calvary; Slavic custom: one solemn sign as offerings pass.
Creed (Nicene)	At beginning and/or when Trinity is explicitly affirmed — "I believe in one God..." — 1 sign max.	Affirms 4th-century councils; OCA style limits signs to key clauses only.

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Anaphora / Epiclesis	When priest invokes the Holy Spirit; laity may kneel (non-Sunday/non-festal); sign at consecration words.	Mystery of transformation; signs for humility; 1st-century Last Supper roots. Silent prayers during this moment.
Lord's Prayer	Before reciting — single sign.	Jesus' taught prayer; sign emphasizes devotion, a daily practice since Tertullian (3rd century).
Holy Communion	Before approaching (arms crossed over chest); single sign after receiving (optional).	Awe before Eucharist; for baptized faithful only; both signs bracket reception.
Thanksgiving / Dismissal	During final blessing when priest raises cross over congregation — single sign.	Represents Ascension; humble bow and sign receive blessing per early Church benedictions.
Exiting the Church	After receiving antidoron (blessed bread); final single sign with bow at doors.	Closes worship; antidoron for all; sign/bow at entry/exit completes the liturgical arc.

**A Note on Prostrations & Pious Customs:** *This guide is a primer — a starting point for building attentive, reverent worship. Orthodox piety is richly varied: many faithful also make full prostrations (земные поклоны) at appointed moments such as the Epiclesis, the Prayer of St. Ephrem, or during penitential seasons; others observe additional bows, crossings, or gestures inherited from their parish or spiritual father. The goal is not to accumulate the maximum number of signs, but to pray with the body as well as the heart. **When in doubt, ask your priest.***