

# The Invocation, Confession, and Absolution

## Invocation

The one thing that sets Christianity apart from other religions is that we are the only ones whose God is Triune. We confess the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three distinct Persons in one Godhead. So, we begin our services invoking, or calling on the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This is also how Christ commanded us to baptize (*Matthew 28:19*). We are saying that we are God's baptized people gathered here to worship Him. We make the sign of the cross to remember our Baptism.

## Confession

We are sinners. We sin every day in thought, word, and deed. Confessing our sins to God and asking for forgiveness is the first step in preparing ourselves to receive the body and blood of Christ in Holy Communion. We use this response (*1 John 1:8—9*) to remind ourselves of our need for repentance and the assurance of God's forgiveness: *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Since we don't have kneelers in our pews, the pastor kneels in humility for all the people.

## Absolution

In *Matthew 16:19* and *John 20:23*, Jesus gives the apostles, and by extension, the church the authority to forgive sins. We call this the Office of the Keys, and you'll learn more about that in Confirmation classes. For the sake of order, the church has designated this responsibility to the pastor for public services. When he pronounces the absolution, he is speaking "in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ." Once again, we make the sign of the cross to remember our Baptism.

## The Sign of the Cross

One way to help you keep the sign of the cross from becoming habit is to remember this saying: "The Lord Jesus Christ (touch your head) came into this world (touch your breastbone) to die on the cross (touch your right shoulder) and come into my heart (touch your left shoulder)."