MAKING THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

Orthodox Christians make the sign of the cross. We join the index and the thumb of the right hand that we believe in:

- God the Father who loves us
- God the Son (Jesus) who saves us
- God the Holy Spirit who lives in us

The three fingers are joined together to show that we believe in one God not three. The other two fingers remind us that Jesus was both God and man at the same time. We drop the two fingers into the palm of the hand to show that Jesus came down from heaven to save us.

Making the sign of the cross, we pray:

In the name of the Father (as we touch our forehead)
and of the Son (as we touch our chest)
and of the Holy Spirit (as we touch first our left and then our right shoulder).
One God, Amen.

When we make the sign of the cross, we are praying not only with our mind and heart but also with our body.

ICONS

When we go into an orthodox church, we see icons or holy pictures everywhere.

An icon is like a window that helps us look into heaven. It shows us the holy people, or saints, who lived before us. Icons also show us the miracles of Jesus and all that He did for us.

If someone who does not believe in God, asks you what you believe, take him into church and show him the icons. This is like "show and tell" at school. Icons show and tell what we believe.

We do not worship icons. We worship God. Icons help us to worship and honor God.

When we stand in church and see all the icons of Church and the saints, we feel that we are not alone. We feel that we are part of God's family. All the saints are our brothers and sisters. We, too, are called to be saints- God's holy people.

Because each one of us is made in the image of God, we, too, are icons. The word image means icon (picture). We are living icons of Christ. Other people are also living icons of God.

That is why we treat them with even more love and respect than we do the wooden icons.

An icon is not fully an icon until it is blessed by the bishop in church. Then it becomes a place of prayer where we meet Christ and pray to Him.

If icons are windows to heaven, let us use them often to peek into heaven.
What’s the first thing you seen when you get to church?

The church building of course!!

The church building is God’s house.

Because God is King of kings, the house of God is built to look like a palace. A palace is a very beautiful building where the King lives. Oftentimes there is a gold dome on top of the church. Gold is a color used for kings. We go to church because God is more than a king for us. He is our loving father. We go to church because we belong there. We are members of God’s kingly or royal family. Each of us is a prince or princess in God’s eyes. Because we belong to God, we are very important people. The more we love God, the more we want to go to His palace and be with Him.

Have you ever noticed an egg hanging down in front of the Altar?

Well that is not just any type of egg... it’s an OSTRICH EGG!

Can you guess why we hang an Ostrich Egg in the front of the church?

Well...

In the Coptic Orthodox Church, the ostrich egg is considered to be a symbol of the Resurrection, as St. Mary Magdalene used an egg to explain to the emperor how life can emerge from something which appears dead. The ostrich egg is also a symbol of the spiritual life, as it is said that after laying her eggs in the sand, the ostrich concentrates her gaze on her eggs, refusing to turn her head in any other direction until the eggs have hatched.

That is just like us... from the first moment we step into church, we must concentrate our mind on God and not turn our head in any other direction. We should give all of our thoughts and all our attention to the Holy Liturgy and not to the un-holy world!

So next time you notice the Ostrich Egg in church ask yourself...

which direction is your head facing... towards the Lord or towards the world???