What's the right way to make the sign of the cross (I see you do it different than what I was taught)?

I'm guessing most of you haven't heard of the word *adiaphora*, but that word kind of sums up the answer to this question. *Adiaphora* is a Greek word that means "indifferent things." In the church we use it to refer to "things God has neither expressly commanded or forbidden." In other words, it refers to areas of "Christian freedom." We are free to choose to do things a certain way - or not.

As this relates to the question above, God never instructs us in His Word (the Bible) to make the sign of the cross. This doesn't mean making the sign of the cross is a bad thing - God has not forbidden it either. The sign of the cross can be a very good way to remind yourself of the reality that as a baptized believer in Jesus your sins have been paid for on the cross. (We will have ashes applied to our foreheads on Ash Wednesday in the shape of a cross for this very purpose).

In fact, you may have seen this statement at the beginning of the Divine Services in our hymnal *"The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their baptism."* "May" is a word indicating that the making of the sign of the cross is a suggestion - a good one - but not an absolute requirement. You will also notice little cross symbols during the words of the Invocation, the Lord's Supper and the Benediction. These cross symbols indicate places where the Pastor traditionally makes a sign of the cross.

The key word here is tradition. There are many actions and rituals that have developed in the church over the years as a way to teach or remind us of important truths. Again, there is are no command from God that we must undertake these traditional actions and rituals - or do them in a certain way. We simply continue to do them because they can be helpful as a visible reminders of important truths. It has become a tradition to make the sign of the cross as a way to remind us of what happened on the cross and that it happened for us.

Over the centuries various branches of Christianity have instituted different ways to make the sign of the cross, (e.g. how to hold your fingers, and which parts of your body to touch - head, shoulders etc... - and in which order). Each variation has a different symbolism designed to remind the one who makes the sign of different aspects of our faith. But the most important thing to remember is that there is no single, universal correct way to do it, because it is not commanded by God. However you do it, making the sign of the cross can be a simple reminder of who you are in Christ.

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net