

Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord

On the feast of the Epiphany, conveniently close to the beginning of the New Year, the ancient tradition has been to ask God's blessing on homes as the inscription below is marked above the main entrance to the home. The main entrance to the home is inscribed with blessed chalk using the legendary names or initials of the three Magi, and the numerals of the New Year, connected with a series of crosses.

The initials C, M, and B commemorate the Magi: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar but also stand for the Latin prayer request *Christus Mansionem Benedicat*: "May Christ bless this house." Accordingly, the main entrance of a house would be marked as follows: **20 + C + M + B + 23**.

There is also a special blessing for water on the feast of the Epiphany because of its connection to the celebration of Jesus' baptism, which we commemorate on the Sunday following Epiphany. This ancient rite of the blessing of holy water, with its extraordinarily powerful prayers of exorcism, renders Epiphany Water more spiritually potent than 'ordinary' holy water. Also, blessed salt is part of the ritual the priest uses to 'make' Epiphany water.

Instructions for Blessing the Home

The family gathers at the main entrance of the home. The head of the family, using the blessed chalk, inscribes the blessing above the door (either inside or outside of the home, preferably outside if there is a porch or protected doorway).

20 + C + M + B + 23

As the inscription is being written, the head of the family says:

The three Wise Men, Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar

(*write 20 +*)

followed the star of God's Son

(*write C +*)

who became human two thousand and nineteen years ago.

(write M +)

May Christ bless our home

(write B +)

and remain with us throughout the new year.

(write 23)

Amen.

The leader of the family then prays:

Visit, O blessed Lord, this home with the gladness of your presence. Bless all who live or visit here with the gift of your love; and grant that we may manifest your love to each other and to all whose lives we touch. May we grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of you; guide, comfort, and strengthen us in peace, O Jesus Christ, now and forever. Amen

The leader of the family continues:

“Chalking the door” is a way to celebrate and literally mark the occasion of the Epiphany and God’s blessing of our lives and home. With time the chalk will fade. As it does we let the meaning of the symbols written sink into the depths of our heart and be manifest in our words and actions as we continue to pray, *Christus mansionem benedictat*, “May Christ bless the house.”

The leader of the family then goes throughout the house sprinkling it with the Epiphany holy water. All present join in procession.