

Epiphany Blessing of the Home & Household - 2011

The traditional date of Epiphany is January 6, but in the United States it is celebrated on the Sunday after Christmas, between January 2 and January 8. The whole of the Christmas season, especially on the feast of the Epiphany, is a traditional time to bless homes, including passageways and doorways.

Often related to these blessings is a ritual of “chalking” the doors of the home with the numbers of the year separated by the initials, CMB. The letters traditionally refer to the legendary names of the three kings: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar (Scripture neither names them nor says there were three of them). Another tradition refers to it as the abbreviation of the Latin phrase, *Christus mansionem benedicat*, translated as “May Christ bless this house.”

To chalk the door for Epiphany, one would write in chalk on the outside lintel above the door: 20 + C + M + B 11.

After singing a joyful hymn, such as “O Come, All Ye Faithful”, all make the sign of the cross. The leader begins:

Leader: ✕ Peace be with this house and with all who live here.
Blessed be God for ever.

All: Blessed be God forever!

The leader may use these or similar words to introduce the blessing:

Leader: Today we gather in this holy place to recognize that Christ dwells here.

As the Three Kings followed the light of the star, we too follow the light of Christ to be a place of welcome, a people of generosity, and a dwelling place for God.

The home is where we first learn to pray and search for Christ, to forgive and receive forgiveness, to offer our gifts, and to bless each other.

Let us then ask God to open our hearts so that, as the doors of this home are opened to neighbor and traveler, this family may be a source of welcome for all in need and a place where Christ is found.

As the words of the Gospel of John are proclaimed, let us consecrate this door and the home it protects, and all the doors herein to Christ who is the sheepgate.

Let the front door be the threshold that leads both ways to the blessings and goodness of God.

*As the Scripture below is proclaimed, the oldest and the youngest persons of the household may take turns using **chalk** to inscribe "20 + C + M + B 11" on the outside lintel of the front door. A reader may slowly read the following text of sacred Scripture from the family Bible as the inscription is written over the door – John 1:13-14.*

Reader:	In the beginning was the Word,	(inscribe 2)
	and the Word was with God,	(inscribe 0)
	and the Word was God.	(inscribe +)
	He was in the beginning with God.	(inscribe C)
	All things came to be through him,	(inscribe +)
	and without him nothing came to be.	(inscribe M)
	And the Word became flesh	(inscribe +)
	and made his dwelling among us,	(inscribe B)
	and we saw his glory,	(inscribe 1)
	the glory as of the Father's only Son,	(inscribe 1)
	full of grace and truth.	

The gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Then, as the following Scripture passage is proclaimed, another family member places an **Epiphany card** (representing the Three Kings) over the front door on the inside of the house.*

Reader: And behold,
the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them,
until it came and stopped over the place where the child was.
They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house
they saw the child with Mary his mother.
They prostrated themselves and did him homage.

Those gathered sing an appropriate song, such as "We Three Kings," as they each receive a lit candle and follow the family into the main gathering space of the home. Before chalking all of the doorways they wish on the interior, the leader begins the litany and all join in its response as the family proceeds to chalk their interior doorways.

Leader: As this household has been given the light of Christ through baptism,
let us pray that this home shines radiantly with the love of God to be a shelter of
peace for all who visit and dwell in it as we sign all of our doorways.

Leader: Our response is: Make us your dwelling place, Lord.

All: Make us your dwelling place, Lord.

Leader: With Mary, and Joseph: **Make us your dwelling place, Lord.**
With Anne and Joachim: ...
With Elizabeth and Zechariah:
With Anna and Simeon:
With the shepherds and the kings:
With all the angels and saints:
With all holy men and women:
For the sick and the hungry:
For the homeless and the lonely:
For friend and stranger:
For neighbor and traveler:
In our hopes and dreams:
In our faults and failings:
In times of joy and peace:
In times of sadness and grief:
When anger and fear confuse us:
When pride and pain confound us:
When the plans we make must change:
When you call us home by a different way:
In all things, great and small:

The leader continues.

Leader: Christ taught us to call upon the Father, and so we pray:

All: Our Father...

Those gathered may then place a hand on the shoulder of the person near them as the leader says the following prayer.

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation,
for through your goodness you have given us shelter from the cold
and the light of your Word to brighten the darkness of night.

We come to you bearing no gifts for everything we have is a gift from you.
All we can offer is our love for each other and our faith in your Son.

Transform, then, these humble gifts into an epiphany,
a revelation of your divine presence, and bless this house and all who come to it.

May this home and this family be a light for all who are lost and afraid,
a place of peace and hospitality for those in need,
and a sign that you are indeed God with us.

And when our long journey has ended, lead us all by the star of your mercy
that we may come home to you to the dwelling place you have prepared for us.

Grant this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

The leader says:

Leader: Let us bless the Lord.

All respond, making the sign of the cross:

All: ✠ Thanks be to God.

The prayer may conclude with the singing of a Christmas carol, such as "Joy to the World".

