

Epiphany House Blessing

In some parts of the world, particularly Great Britain, there is a custom of gathering in homes to ask God's blessing on those dwellings and upon all who live, work, and visit there. With chalk, they write an inscription on the inside lintel above the front door:

20 + C + M + B + 21

Because Epiphany comes so near the beginning of the new year, the numbers represent an annual renewal of God's blessing. The four digits designating the new year appear at the beginning and end of the line. The letters have two meanings. They are the initials of the traditional names of the magi: Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar. They also abbreviate the Latin words "Christus mansionem benedicat." "May Christ bless this house." The letters recall the day on which the inscription is made, as well as the purpose of blessing.

The crosses represent Christ, whom we invoke, and the saintliness of the magi. The inscription is made above the front door, so that all who enter and depart this year may enjoy God's blessing. Chalk, a substance made of common elements of the earth, is used by teachers to instruct students and by children in their games and play. We use chalk in this service as an ordinary substance put to holy use. Further, chalk will not permanently mar the dwelling. As its image fades from view over time, those who participated in its original placement will remember it and the purpose for which it was intended. In doing so, they may rededicate themselves to that purpose. After a year passes and a new Epiphany arrives, they will have the opportunity once again to celebrate the themes of this season and once again to seek God's blessing on their homes and on those who come and go through the home.

Some time this week, you may wish to gather together with family, friends, or by yourself and offer a prayer of blessing for you home. If there is a group of people, you may designate one leader to read or share the responsibility among everyone. Boldfaced lines are for everyone to read.

The Blessing of Our Homes

Peace be to this house

and to all who live, work, and visit here.

The three wise men came to Bethlehem in search of the Lord. They brought to him precious gifts: gold to honor the newborn king, incense to the true God in human form, and myrrh to anoint his body, which one day would die like our own.

Let us pray. O God, you once used a star to show to all the world that Jesus is your Son. May the light of that star that once guided wise men to honor his birth, now guide us to recognize him also, to know you by faith, and to see you in the epiphanies of the daily experiences of our lives. Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord — Jesus born of Mary — shall be revealed.

As the Wise Men once sought your brilliant light, O Lord, so may we seek to live and work in your splendor.

O God of Light, bless our house and all who enter it. May this be a place of peace and health.

May each person who dwells herein cultivate the gifts and graces you have bestowed, dedicating our talents and works for the good of all.

Make this house a shelter in the storm and a haven of rest for all in need of your warmth and care.

And when we go out from this place, may we never lose sight of that Epiphany star.

As we go about our work, our study, our play, keep us in its light and in your love.

People may take turns marking the doorway with one or more of the symbols:

20 + C + M + B + 21

May the Lord watch over our going out and our coming in, from this time forth and forevermore.

Amen.