

Chalking of the Door: A House Blessing at Epiphany

The feast of manifestation, or Epiphany, is traditionally celebrated on the 12th day after Christmas, January 6th. In the dioceses of the United States this feast has been moved to Sunday. It is traditional for parish priests to bless chalk for parish families so that they may mark the names of the three Magi over their doors, in the blessing of homes as a witness of their faith and protection against evil.

We invite you to adopt this custom in your family. The family gathers to ask God's blessing on their home and on those who live in or visit the home. It is an invitation for Jesus to be a daily guest in our home, our comings and goings, our conversations, our work and play, our joys and sorrows.

A traditional way of doing this is to use chalk to write above the home's entrance, for example:

20 + C + M + B + 21. The letters **C, M, B** have two meanings. They are the initials of the traditional names of the three magi: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. They also abbreviate the Latin words *Christus mansionem benedicat*, "May Christ bless the house." The "+" signs represent the cross and the last two digit number represents the year (20 __).



Instructions for Blessing the Home

Using the blessed chalk mark the lintel of your front door (or front porch step) as follows:
20 + C + M + B + 21 while saying:

The three Wise Men, Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, followed the star of God's Son who became human two thousand and eighteen years ago. May Christ bless our home and remain with us throughout the new year. Amen.

Then offer the following prayer:

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

"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 the Latin words, *Christus mansionem benedicat*, "May Christ bless the house."