

Chalking the Door on the Feast of the Epiphany

It has been a tradition in a number of European cultures to pray a particular blessing over the home on the Feast of the Epiphany. Known colloquially as 'chalking the door' this Epiphany blessing is one way that families and individuals can invite God's blessing into their home and family life throughout the year.

To ask this blessing of God for your home and family you'll need the following:

- A piece of chalk. Any color will do.
- The short blessing liturgy provided below.

The blessing is very simple. It involves a short reading from scripture, the tracing of "20+C+M+B+19" (without the quotation marks) by a family member over the lintel of the main entrance to the home (inside or outside are equally fine options), and a short, shared prayer at the end.

The numbers are for the current year.

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*, which stands for "May Christ bless the house."

The "+" signs represent the cross, a reminder that it is through Christ's Passion, death and resurrection that all grace flows and that it will be our family's willingness to share each other's crosses throughout the year that will be the greatest source of blessing for all who abide in and enter our homes.



The Blessing:

All gather near the main entrance to the home. Begin with the Sign of the Cross.

Leader: "Peace be to this house and to all who dwell here, in the name of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Reader: When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." After their audience with the king they set out. 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. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.
The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Using the chalk, write on the outside of your house or inside above the main entrance, 20+C+M+B+19

As you inscribe this, you may speak the words "*Christus Mansionem Benedicat*" or simply say "May Christ bless this house".

End with the following, brief prayer:

All: Lord God of heaven and earth, you revealed your only begotten Son to every nation by the guidance of a star. Bless this house and all who live here and all who visit. May we be blessed with health, kindness of heart, gentleness and the keeping of your law. Fill us with the light of Christ, that our love for each other may go out to all. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

This traditional home blessing is a wonderful way to engage the whole family, your friends and even neighbours in seeking the graces they need for the coming year. The inscription above the door will also become an interesting conversation piece throughout the year. As friends and family members come and go be sure to welcome their questions about this unique set of symbols. May your 2019 be truly blessed!