

Chalking the House



A traditional way of chalking the house is to write above the home's entrance, 20 + C + M + B + XX (representing this 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***, "May Christ bless the house." The "+" signs represent the cross and 202X is the year. This blessing has biblical roots, deeply tied to the Passover in the book of Exodus.

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt ... "take some of the blood [of the lamb], and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat them. They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it ... The blood shall be a sign for you, upon the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall fall upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." (cf. Exodus 12:1-13)

It is no coincidence that the Epiphany blessing is traditionally written on the lintel of the main doorway and even some of the prayers echo God's words of protection that he gave to Moses. While the Epiphany blessing was not given in the same manner as it was to Moses, the Church provides it for our own spiritual benefit. The Church desires our salvation and so gives us beautiful sacramentals to assist us along the path to Eternal Life.

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 + XX while saying: ***The three Wise Men, Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar followed the star of God's Son who became human over two thousand 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 manifested in our words and actions.

