

Bite-Size Catholic Living IV

Life Style: An Epiphany House Blessing

An **Epiphany** tradition found among Eastern European Christians is the blessing of homes at Epiphany. All that is needed is chalk and incense. The chalk is used to mark the lintels of the main doors that enter the home with the calendar year framing the three letters C, M and B in the following formation:

20 + C + M + B + 20

The “C + M + B” have a dual meaning. They represent the traditional names of the magi, Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar and also the Latin phrase, *Christus mansionem benedicat*, which means, “Christ blesses our home”. The incense is to be burned in the home. Incense is one of the gifts brought to the Christ Child at Epiphany representing Jesus’ divinity. The rising smoke of incense, as in our liturgical services, represents our prayers rising to God. That which is incensed is holy such as the people, the altar, and the gifts in church. Here, the home and those who dwell in it are holy.

Prayer

- A simply outline for prayer and blessing your home as a family on the Feast of Epiphany is as follows:

Make a Sign of the Cross together. **Sing** a Christmas Carol and as you do **Mark** the major entrances into your home with the chalk. *Parents, consider lifting up your smaller children and have them share in making the markings.*

Burn the incense and enjoy its sweet scent as you **Read** the Epiphany story found in Matthew: 2: 1-11 on the reverse side. Let each member of the family **Share** one aspect of the story that they thought was important to them. **Conclude** with the following prayer and the Sign of the Cross and another carol.

*Loving God, you are the guardian of our homes.
Teach us to rely on your word,
clothe us in gentleness and patience, and unite us in love.*

*Make us ever thankful for the blessings you give us
through Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
in the splendour of eternal light, now and forever. Amen.*

The biblical passage is found on the reverse side.

Belief

The Visit of the Magi [Matthew chapter 2, verses 1 – 12]

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.”*

When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They said to him, *“In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet:*

*‘And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”*

Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star’s appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, *“Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and 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.

Reflection Questions: When was the last time you looked up at the stars and wondered? What do you call to mind when you look up at the stars? The magi brought the child Jesus strange gifts; gold, incense and myrrh. What would you have brought to Jesus? What do you offer Jesus each day?