

Chalking the Door: Blessing Your Home for Epiphany

By Deacon Greg Kandra

A beautiful Epiphany tradition will continue at my parish this morning, as a priest will bless chalk and scrawl markings over the door of the church at the start of our 10 a.m. Mass, carrying forth an ancient custom practiced in many homes around the world.

Some background:

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, 20 + C + M + B + 16. 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 2016 is the year.

Blessing the Chalk

V. Our help is the name of the Lord:

R. The maker of heaven and earth.

V. The Lord shall watch over your going out and your coming in:

R. From this time forth for evermore.

Let us pray.

Loving God, bless this chalk which you have created, that it may be helpful to your people; and grant that through the invocation of your most Holy Name that we who use it in faith to write upon the door of our home the names of your holy ones Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, may receive health of body and protection of soul for all who dwell in or visit our home; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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 + 16 while saying:

The three Wise Men, Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar followed the star of God's Son who became human two thousand and fifteen 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."