

# The Blessing of a Home on Epiphany

The lintel inscription is made using blessed chalk. It consists of the first two digits of the year, followed by the letters "CMB" and the last two digits of the year. Each component is separated by a cross, which invokes the protection of the Precious Blood of Christ. The letters are the first initials of the three Magi: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar, and they also stand for the Latin phrase "Christus mansionem benedicat" which means "May Christ bless the house." The house is typically blessed by the head of the household with the family gathered around.

**V:** The Lord be with you

**R:** And with your spirit

**V:** A reading from the Gospel of John.

**R:** Glory to you, O Lord

**V:** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him. But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man's decision but of God. And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.

The Gospel of the Lord

**R:** Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ

**All:** Our Father, who art in Heaven...

**V:** O God, who on this day and by virtue of a star leading the way didst reveal Thine only-begotten Son to the Gentiles: mercifully grant that we who know Thee now by faith may be led all the way up to a contemplation of the beauty of Thy Highness. We ask this through the same Christ Our Lord, Amen.

Our help is in the name of the Lord.

**R:** Who made heaven and earth.

**V:** The Three Wise Men, Caspar (*write the letter C*), Melchior (*write the letter M*), and Balthazar (*write the letter B*) followed the star of God's Son, who became man, Two Thousand (*write the number 20*) and Twenty-Four years ago (*write the number 24*). May Christ bless our home ++ (*draw the first two crosses*), and remain with us through the new year ++ (*and the last two crosses*).

**20+C+M+B+24**

Almighty God, incline your ear. Bless us and all who are gathered here. Send your holy angel who will defend us and fill with grace all who dwell here.

**R.** Amen.

*The head of the household then sprinkles the interior of the home with Epiphany water or holy water.*



# They Came from Afar

I grew up with a Tradition celebrating the Twelve Nights of Christmas. The Twelfth Night was special as it marked the highpoint of the Christmas Season, the Feast of the Epiphany. The Feast of Epiphany is magical, mysterious, and delightful. So important is this Feast that it has a Season of its own for many Christians. In many churches, the date of Easter is formally proclaimed after the proclamation of the Gospel.

I went to Grandma's house as a little boy, where she "hid" the Three Kings in plain sight. When the children discovered the kings, we carried them to the Manger, and the joy of Christmas lingered in the air. There is a peaceful quiet about this Feast of divine manifestation, light, and peace.

Of course, the Magi did not go to the Manger. The Manger is a detail in Luke's Gospel. Matthew's Gospel, where we find the story of the Magi, has the child born at home in Bethlehem in the house of Joseph. The two stories told by Matthew and Luke have been conflated over the centuries. It helps to separate the narratives probing their distinctive symbolism and significance.

Matthew's narrative tells the story of radical inclusion and unbounded hospitality. The strangers from afar do not become objects of suspicions but guests honored invited to see the newborn child. Children bring joy to the World. They are God's blessing to a World that is often harsh and cruel. Matthew tells the story of the Magi in the context of Herod's desire to

maintain his power by killing the children he fears threaten his power. While danger looms in the background, the infant's parents open the doors of their home and hearts to the strangers from afar. There is a great lesson here.

We must open our hearts to one another if peace is ever to be a reality. We must go out of our way to meet the stranger and seek to become friends. The Magi are of a different culture, religion, and nation. Yet, they are invited into the intimacy of the household of the newborn child. This is a story of trust, openness, and courage. Would be enemies rejoice and gift one another as the star shines brightly.

May the star of our self-giving shine brightly as we enter into the uncertainty of a new year. Epiphany means manifestation. May we manifest our love and care for one another. Let us have the courage to cross the ocean to find a friend, to travel across the land to meet one another, to cross the street to care for each other.

As the light of the sun grows into longer and longer days of daylight, may the light of our souls shatter the darkness of fear, prejudice, and despair.

Blessings to you, Holy Community, for manifesting the light of love and peace in all the deeds and actions of your lives. Gratitude to you for opening the doors of your hearts to strangers and those who are hurting. May you be blessed by the light you shine on others.

—Fr. Tom Bonacci, CP

