

It is an ancient Catholic custom to bless our homes on the feast of the Epiphany with special prayers that recall the journey of the wise men to the infant Christ. This custom of blessing the home is found in many cultures. Our homes are sacred places of rest, of refreshment, of refuge from the cares of the world. In our homes, we exchange love with family members, offer care to the helpless, the ill, the young. We extend the great Christian virtue of hospitality by inviting others into our sacred space. How fitting that we should bless our homes when at the threshold, we welcome all who enter in an atmosphere of warmth and acceptance, cherishing and nurturing. As each person leaves, we send them forth with a good-bye, not in the modern casual sense of “see you later” but rather in the original meaning that of “God be with you” until we see you again. Visitors leave strengthened by their time with us. Remember that the earliest shrines – holy places – were in the home; that it was only later in Christian history that we designated churches and other “official” places as holy.

The traditional way of blessing the home is to use chalk blessed during the Epiphany liturgy and write above the home’s entryway(s), 20+C+M+B+17. The letters C,M,B have two meanings. They are the initials of the traditional names of the three magi: Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar. They also abbreviate the Latin words for *Christus mansionem benedicat*, “May Christ bless the house.” The + sign represents the cross and 2017 is the year.

Whether you live with others or alone, you can use this special blessing at the beginning of this new year. You just need a piece of chalk which we’ve included for you.

Introductory Rites

All make the sign of the Cross saying in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Leader: Peace be with this house and to all who dwell here.

ALL: Blessed be God forever

Leader: Today, we gather in this holy place to recognize that Christ dwells here. As the Three Kings followed the light of the star, we too follow the light of Christ to be a place of welcome, a people of generosity and a dwelling place for God.

The home is called the domestic church. It is where we first learn to pray and search for Christ, to forgive and receive forgiveness, to offer our gifts and to bless each other.

Let us then ask God to open our hearts so that, as the doors of this home are opened to neighbor and traveler, this family may be a source of welcome for all in need and a place where Christ is found.

Reading of the Word of God

A leader may slowly read the following text of sacred Scripture as the inscription is written over the door – John 1:13-14.

Each part of the inscription could be written by a different member of the household.

In the beginning was the Word, (inscribe 2)
and the Word was with God, (inscribe 0)
and the Word was God. (inscribe +)
He was in the beginning with God. (inscribe C)
All things came to be through him, (inscribe +)
And without him nothing came to be. (inscribe M)
And the Word became flesh (inscribe +)
and made his dwelling among us, (inscribe B)
and we saw his glory, (inscribe +)
the glory as of the Father’s only Son, (inscribe 1)
full of grace and truth. (inscribe 7)
The gospel of the Lord.

ALL: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ



20 + C + M + B + 17
Christus Mansionem Benedicat
(May Christ bless this dwelling place)

Leader: May all who come to our home this year, rejoice to find Christ living among us. May we be blessed with health, goodness of heart, gentleness, and faithfulness to do your will. And may we seek and serve, in everyone we meet, that same Jesus who is your incarnate Word, now and forever.

ALL: Amen

You may wish to sing verses of We Three Kings:

We three kings of Orient are;
bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain,
following yonder star.

Glorious now behold him arise;
King and God and sacrifice:
Alleluia, Alleluia,
Earth to heaven replies.

Refrain: O star of wonder, star of light,
star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.

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Litany

Leader: As this household has been given the light of Christ through baptism, let us pray that this home shines radiantly with the love of God to be a shelter of peace for all who visit and dwell in it.

Reader: Our response is: "Make us your dwelling place, Lord."

With Mary and Joseph:

ALL: Make us your dwelling place, Lord.

With Anne and Joachim:

Make us your dwelling place, Lord.

With Elizabeth and Zechariah:

Make us your dwelling place, Lord.

With Anna and Simeon:

Make us your dwelling place, Lord.

With the shepherds and the kings:

Make us your dwelling place, Lord.

With all the angels and saints:

Make us your dwelling place, Lord.

With all holy men and women:

Make us your dwelling place, Lord.

For the sick and the hungry:

Make us your dwelling place, Lord.

For the homeless and the lonely:

Make us your dwelling place, Lord.

For friend and stranger:

Make us your dwelling place, Lord.

For neighbor and traveler:

Make us your dwelling place, Lord.

In our faults and failings:

Make us your dwelling place, Lord.

In times of joy and peace:

Make us your dwelling place, Lord.

In times of sadness and grief:

Make us your dwelling place, Lord.

When anger and fear confuse us:

Make us your dwelling place, Lord.

When pride and pain confound us:

Make us your dwelling place, Lord.

When the plans we make must change:

Make us your dwelling place, Lord.

When you call us home by a different way:

Make us your dwelling place, Lord.

In all things, great and small:

Make us your dwelling place, Lord.

Leader: Christ taught us to call upon the Father, and so we pray together:

ALL: Our Father . . .

Concluding Blessing

Leader: May God bless and keep us.

May his face shine upon us and be gracious to us.

May God look upon us kindly and give us peace.

ALL: Amen (All can sing an appropriate song such as Joy to the World.)

