



Chalking the Door

An Epiphany Blessing of the Home

In some parts of the world, a custom for Epiphany is to mark the door of the home, usually the front or main entrance, with a sacred sign or symbol as one asks for God's blessing upon those who live, work, or visit throughout the coming year. In Exodus, the Israelites marked their doors with blood so that the Lord would pass over their homes; but in this act, we mark our doors with chalk as a sign that we have invited God's presence and blessing into our homes.

Chalk is an ordinary substance being put to holy use. Chalk will not permanently mar the dwelling and, as its image fades from view over time, those who participated in its original placement will remember it and the purpose for which it was intended. In doing so, they may remember and rededicate themselves to that purpose and, after a year passes and a new Epiphany arrives, to again seek God's blessing on their home and on those who come and go through it.

In the short blessing ceremony, one writes with chalk the following inscription on the door frame above the door (or near it):

20 C M B 21

The inscription contains the letters C, M, and B between the numbers of the current year (2021). The letters stand for *Christus Mansionem Benedicat*, which is Latin for "May Christ bless this dwelling."

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The following blessing ceremony can be used along with placing the inscription. Please adapt it to your participant group (e.g., participants can take turns speaking the Leader parts) and add to it your own prayers, Scriptures, and songs, as desired.

Leader: The Lord be with you.

Others: And also with you.

All (Leader and Others): Peace be to this house and to all who live, work, and visit here.

Leader: The wise men came to Bethlehem in search of the Lord. They brought him precious gifts: gold to honor the King of kings; frankincense to worship the true God in human form; and myrrh to anoint his body which one day would die for the sins of the world.

Leader: Let us pray. O God, you once used a star to show all the world the way to Jesus, your Son. May the light of that star that once guided wise men to honor his birth, now guide us to also recognize him, to know you by faith, and to see you in the epiphanies you continue to place in our everyday lives.

Leader: Arise, shine, for our light has come, and the glory of the Lord, Jesus born of the virgin Mary, shall be revealed.

Others: And all humankind shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

All: As the wise men once sought your brilliant light, O Lord, so may we seek to live and work in your splendor.

Leader: O God of Light, bless our home and our family. May this be a place of peace and health. May each member of this family cultivate the gifts and graces you have bestowed on each of us and dedicate their talents and works for the good of all.

Leader: Make this house a shelter in the storm and a haven of rest for all in need of your warmth and care. And when we go out from this place, may we never lose sight of your light.

Others: As we go about our work, our study, and our play, keep us in your light and in your love.

Leader: Lord Jesus, through your Incarnation and birth in true human form, you have made all the earth holy. We now ask your blessing upon this simple gift of your creation -- chalk. It is an ordinary tool that we use to teach our children, and something the children use in their games and play. Now, with your grace, may it become a tool for us to mark the doors of our home with your name and blessing. **[Mark the inscription on the door frame now.]**

Leader: May all of us who live in this house, and all who come here to visit, to work, and to play, remember these things throughout the coming year. May all who come and go here find peace, comfort, joy, hope, love, and salvation, for Christ has come to dwell in this house and in our hearts.

All: May we be Christ's light in the world. Amen.

Adapted from the Worship website of the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship, 2019.