

20+C+M+B+21

## A Blessing for the Home

This is an ancient blessing in the Catholic tradition that transcends cultures and continents. Legend holds that the letters correspond to the initials for the names of the Three Magi: Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar. More importantly, these letters abbreviate the Latin phrase “Christus Mansionem Benedicat” – “May Christ bless this house”.

### Prayer for Chalking the Entryway

Begin by singing a refrain of familiar a Christmas song (e.g. “O Come All Ye Faithful” or “What Child is This?”)

**Leader:** The Lord be with you;

**ALL: And with your spirit.**

Leader: May Christ dwell in this house and make it a household of love and peace!

**ALL: And all who come in friendship!**

**Leader:** Let us pray. O God, you once made a humble home for Jesus and led wise ones to receive hospitality and blessings there. May the warmth of your love guide us to recognize him in the epiphanies of our lives through the coming year. As we cross this threshold each day for work, study or play remind us of our true purpose - to love your people, do your will and lead others to you just as did the wise men of old. May all who enter here find your gracious hospitality in our company and may all who dwell here seek you in the face of every guest.

**ALL: Christ bless this house and make it your home.**

*Invite each person to share in chalking the entryway (top or sides) with the phrase:*

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You might provide a step ladder and assistance so that younger family members can participate. If possible, conclude by singing another song (“O Come All Ye Faithful” or “We Three Kings”)

**Leader:** May Christ dwell with us, keep us from harm and make us one in mind and heart, now and forever We pray for this and all good things in the name of your son, Jesus Christ.

**ALL: Come, Lord Jesus, into our homes and our hearts and remain with us now and always.**

**Blessing Explanation:** The year “2021” is divided by the “CMB” phrase as a reminder to keep Jesus at the center of our lives and our relationships, wherever we go. The four crosses signify the four corners of the world and remind us of our missionary identity as Christian. As followers of Jesus we are called to four commitments: grow in our faith, witness to our faith, share our faith, and be transformed by our faith. In this particularly difficult year the risk of caring more for God and neighbor than ourselves is a cross, most abundantly clear.

Traditionally this blessing is done on Epiphany, but it can be done at any time. The spirit of resolutions that accompanies the New Year is a unique opportunity to open our hearts to Christ and accept his leadership in our lives. This chalking ritual is a simple and versatile way to include family members of any Christian affiliation. And the blessing can be done at schools, faith formation classrooms, nursing homes, hospitality rooms, etc.

**Mardi Gras** – Keep the celebration alive! Don’t forget that the Mardi Gras (or Fat Tuesday) tradition of sharing a “King Cake” is rooted in the Feast of the Kings from Epiphany. This tradition involves a cake with a small trinket of a baby (Jesus) which is hidden inside to remind us of the kingship of Christ in our lives. This celebration can also be shared even in Covid times within the household. Part of this tradition holds that whoever gets the piece of cake with the baby inside is treated specially, or ‘king for the day’. In return this person might also be asked to give a brief witness of faith (“Why I follow Jesus”, “Why I am a Catholic” or “Why I belong to My Parish”) at the end of the day. In any case, the person should play a host role for next year, when we hope it will be safe to celebrate with great affection!

### A Covid-Safe Outreach Option:

**Mark Up the Neighborhood** – Other churches do very little with Epiphany. This offers Catholics a distinct opportunity to showcase the richness of our faith. Epiphany is the *Twelfth Night of the Christmas Season*. The holidays are well-known for the emotional slump that follows for many people. Chalking the sidewalks or doors, can warm the heart of someone who feels especially lonely at this time of year. This is also be the last opportunity for caroling. Consider the homebound, newcomers or those who have lost a family member over the past year. You will be surprised how many will be touched by this simple gesture.

Young people are especially fond of marking up their neighborhood with a sign of faith. Much like Halloween, after chalking up the front steps, we can still knock on the door, step back to the sidewalk and sing carols (from a covid-safe distance) when the residents appear. Don’t forget to explain the meaning of the message and be sure to extend best wishes for a healthy and happy new year. Avoid chalking a home with a Jewish mezuzah on the door frame.

Let us go forth to give witness to the kingship of Christ in our lives!