

Home Blessing for the Feast of the Epiphany

In earlier times, the twelve holy nights between Christmas and Epiphany (January 6) were called "Smoke Nights" because the people went through their houses and barns burning incense, blessing their homesteads.

In the Middle Ages it was customary to bless homes with newly blessed Epiphany Water. This holy water was sprinkled in each room. The father would lead the procession with a shovel of charcoal on which he burned incense; the oldest son had a bowl of the holy water. The rest of the family followed along praying the rosary and singing hymns.

While the father and oldest son were incensing and blessing the house, the youngest child carried a plate of chalk, which had been blessed with a special blessing after morning Mass. The father took the blessed chalk and wrote over every room that led from the house into the open: AD 19+C+M+B+00 which stands for "Anno Domini 1900-- Caspar, Melchior, Balthasar" and means "the three Holy Kings, Caspar, Melchior, Balthasar, in the year of Our Lord, 1900" or whatever the year may be, are protecting this house against all evil spirits. The letters C.M.B. also stand for *Christus Mansionem Benedicat* = **May Christ bless this house**. This tradition of blessing the doorways (with blessed chalk) symbolizes the family's commitment to welcome Christ into their homes on a daily basis throughout the year. The blessing of water on the Epiphany recalls that, in the East, the Baptism of Jesus is celebrated on January 6, and not the manifestation of Christ to the Magi, which takes precedence in the West. The sprinkling of Epiphany Water recalls our baptismal regeneration into the life of the Holy Trinity.

A Family Blessing of the Home for the Epiphany

*Taking some of the water blessed on the Vigil of the Epiphany, the head of the family sprinkles it in the main entrance of the home, and says: **God's peace be in this home.***

*All respond: **And in all who live here.***

*All say: **Magi from the East came to Bethlehem to adore the Lord; and opening their treasure chests they presented Him with precious gifts: gold for the great King, incense for the true God, and myrrh in symbol of His burial. Alleluia.***

All then pray the Cantic of Our Lady, the Magnificat, while the head of the family goes through the home sprinkling Epiphany Water:

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

*Then, all pray the **Our Father** together as a family. After this, the head of the family prays: **Let us pray. God, Who on this day revealed your only-begotten Son to all nations by the guidance of a star, grant that we who now know You by faith may finally behold You in Your heavenly majesty; through Christ our Lord. Amen.***

*Then, all say: **Be enlightened and shine forth, O Jerusalem, for your light is come; and upon you is risen the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary.***

*Head of the family: **Nations shall walk in your light, and kings in the splendor of your truth;***

*All: **And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.***

The head of the family then takes the blessed chalk and inscribes on the top of the door frame of at least the main door (other doors may be inscribed):

AD 20 + C + M + B + 12

All conclude with the **Sign of the Cross**.