

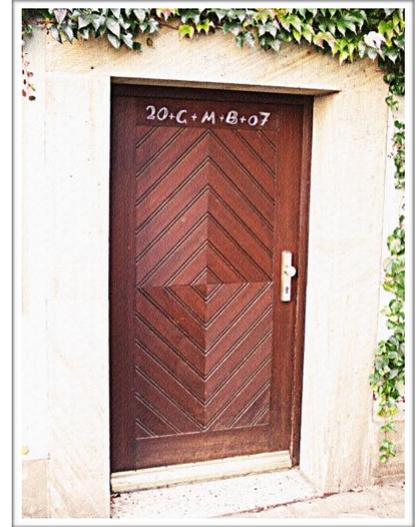
Epiphany Chalking the Door *compiled by Matthew Kozlowski*

Why is this faith practice important?

The home is more than a set of walls with a roof. It is a dwelling place, a haven for rest and safety, a sanctuary where the rhythms of life unfold. Whether our homes are big or small, temporary or longterm, we are called to make room for God and God's blessing.

In Deuteronomy 6:9 God tells the people of Israel: "These words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house... You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." The point is clear: we humans need tangible reminders of God's presence and God's commandments.

"Chalking the door" by inscribing letters and crosses above the doorway of the home is a tradition that comes to us from Europe. It is always performed on Epiphany, sometimes called "Twelfth Night," which is January 6th.



What materials are needed for this practice?

Chalk of any kind or color. A doorway, preferably the main doorway of the home. The inscription can be written on the inside, outside, or both.

How to do it

Mark your calendar: Epiphany is always on January 6th (twelve days after Christmas) so it can fall on any day of the week.

Gather your household: This is fun for everyone to be involved. For those who live alone, you might consider inviting a friend or neighbor.

Pray: Use the prayers and liturgy on the next page to frame the experience.

What to write: Using the chalk, and taking turns, make the following inscription:

20 + C + M + B + 15

(Change the last number to the current year.)

The letters C M B come from the traditional names for the three kings: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. Some also suggest "Christus Mansionem Benedicat" which means, "May Christ bless this dwelling."

Resources for this practice

Liturgy for Chalking the Door

Leader Peace be to this House, and to all who enter here.

People Amen.

One or more of the following prayers maybe said:

May all who come to our home this year rejoice to find Christ living among us; and may we seek and serve, in everyone we meet, that same Jesus who is your incarnate Word, now and forever. Amen.

God of heaven and earth, you revealed your only-begotten One to every nation by the guidance of a star. Bless this house and all who inhabit it. Fill us with the light of Christ, that our concern for others may reflect your love. We ask this through Christ our Savior. Amen.

Loving God, bless this household. May we be blessed with health, goodness of heart, gentleness, and abiding in your will. We ask this through Christ our Savior. Amen.

As participants take turns making the inscription, the following may be said:

The three Wise Men, [C] Caspar, [M] Melchior, [B] and Balthasar followed the star of God's Son who became human [20] two thousand, [15] and fifteen years ago.

[+ +] May Christ bless our home

[+ +] and remain with us throughout the new year. Amen.

All say the Lord's Prayer.

About the author

Matthew Kozlowski manages, edits, and writes for Building Faith. He lives in Alexandria, Virginia with his wife Danielle and two young daughters. Throughout his career he has been a teacher, camp counselor, school chaplain, camp chaplain, Sunday school teacher, parish priest, and Alpha course coordinator.

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