



## *What is an Epiphany House Blessing?*

**T**he marking of the doorway with chalk and the prayer of blessing for the house is an old Epiphany tradition among Christians of many different denominations. The custom is widespread in Southern Germany and Austria, and is often seen in the UK and USA. The Three Kings came to bring gifts and blessings to the baby Jesus, our incarnate God in the manger. All who visited the first home of Jesus were amazed and blessed by his presence.

The marking of our doors at Epiphany reminds us of two things: first, to welcome Christ into our lives and homes that he may reveal his loving purposes in our lives, and second to pray that all who live or visit our homes are made welcome in his name so that his blessings can be made manifest and shared with those we meet.

This is what blessing people and things is all about: a reminder that God loves us and wants us to put the words of our prayers and good intentions into action. God blesses us because he didn't simply *say* that he loved us, but he put his love *into action* by sending us his son, Jesus Christ to be born as one of us, to share and bless our earthly home.

## *How to do it!*

Using a piece of chalk (or blessed chalk, which will be available from St Andrew's Colyton and St Winifred's from Sunday afternoon onwards), find a space near the main entrance to the house, perhaps the lintel, door or brick/stone doorway – anywhere with room enough for the inscription. We mark the year and the initials of the Three Kings: Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar, and the sign of the cross, representing the greatest gift Christ gives to us, which is the eternal life he won for us through the cross. You can also draw little crowns above the letters.

The initials C, M and B also represent a Latin prayer: *Christus mansionem benedicat*, which means 'Christ bless our home'. The inscription is left and will gradually be washed away by the rain and weather: keep your chalk and this card ready for next Epiphany (6<sup>th</sup> January).

All those who live in the house (or as many as possible) gather around the doorway. The lintel or door or doorway is marked (usually by the head of the household, but anyone can do it) like this whilst the prayer is said...

C	Caspar
M	Melchior
B	Balthasar ...followed the star of God's Son who became man...
20	...two thousand and
21	twenty-one years ago...
+	...may Christ bless our home
++	..and remain with us through the new year.

*This prayer is then said:* Almighty God hear *me/us* and bless *me/us*. We thank you for the shelter this house affords we who live here; may it be a place of warmth and welcome to all who visit. Send your holy angel who will defend us, and fill with your grace all who live here. We ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Lord's prayer and Grace may also be said by all present to conclude.

*May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the Shepherds, the perseverance of the Three Kings, the obedience of Mary and Joseph, and the peace of the Christ-child be to you a source of blessing and inspiration during 2021.*