



APOSTOLI VIAE

EPIPHANY BLESSING GUIDE

Each year on or around the feast of the Epiphany parishes throughout the world participate in an annual blessing of chalk. It is an ancient tradition places God at the entrance of your home and the entire family under his protection.

The Epiphany blessing of chalk is a centuries old tradition where priests would visit each home in their parish after the Feast of the Epiphany. Over time it became more difficult to accomplish as parishes became larger and priests were stretched thin. Thus it became an accepted tradition that the spiritual head of the household is able to lead this blessing in place of the priest.

The blessing has Old Testament roots in the Passover account from the book of Exodus.

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt ...

“take some of the blood [of the lamb], and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat them. They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it ... The blood shall be a sign for you, upon the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall fall upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.” (cf. Exodus 12:1-13)

It is no coincidence that the Epiphany blessing is traditionally written on the lintel of the main doorway and that the prayers echo God’s words of protection that he gave to Moses. The Passover ceremony, as much of the Old Testament, was a shadow or type of what was to be fulfilled in Christ. The Epiphany blessing was not given in the same manner as it was to Moses but was certainly foreshadowed in Exodus and the Church provides it for our own spiritual benefit to call to mind the fulfillment in Jesus the Messiah. The

Church desires our salvation and so gives us beautiful sacramentals to assist us along the path to Eternal Life.

Traditionally a priest blesses chalk on the Feast of the Epiphany by saying the following prayer (from the *Roman Ritual*):

Bless, + O Lord God, this creature, chalk, and let it be a help to mankind. Grant that those who will use it with faith in your most holy name, and with it inscribe on the doors of their homes the names of your saints, Casper, Melchior, and Baltassar, may through their merits and intercession enjoy health in body and protection of soul; through Christ our Lord.

It is a beautiful and powerful blessing that yields many graces to those who practice it in faith and is an added protection against any spiritual forces of darkness that are always seeking to enter our homes and families.

The Blessing

Once you acquire the blessed chalk, either a priest or another member of the household can bless the home in the following manner (adapted from the *Roman Ritual*):

Upon entering the house [or at the front door]:

Priest/Head of Household: Peace be to this house.

All: And to all who dwell herein.

Priest: From the east came the Magi to Bethlehem to adore the Lord; and opening their treasures they offered precious gifts: gold for the great King, incense for the true God, and myrrh in symbol of His burial.

During the Magnificat, the room is sprinkled with holy water and incensed.

*All: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.*

From this day all generations will call me blessed:

*the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.*

*He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.*

*He has shown the strength of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.*

*He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.*

*He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.*

*He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children forever.*

After this is completed:

All: From the east came the Magi to Bethlehem to adore the Lord; and opening their treasures they offered precious gifts: gold for the great King, incense for the true God, and myrrh in symbol of His burial.

Priest: Our Father Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead and lead us not into temptation,

All: But deliver us from evil.

Priest: All they from Saba shall come

All: Bringing gold and frankincense.

Priest: O Lord, hear my prayer.

All: And let my cry come unto Thee.

Priest: Let us pray. O God, who by the guidance of a star didst on this day manifest Thine only-begotten Son to the Gentiles, mercifully grant that we who know Thee by faith may also attain the vision of Thy glorious majesty. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Priest: Be enlightened, be enlightened, O Jerusalem, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee— Jesus Christ born of the Virgin Mary.

All: And the Gentiles shall walk in thy light and kings in the splendor of thy rising, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon thee.

Priest: Let us pray. Bless, O Lord God almighty, this home, that in it there may be health, purity, the strength of victory, humility, goodness and mercy, the fulfillment of Thy law, the thanksgiving to God the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. And may this blessing remain upon this home and upon all who dwell herein. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

After the prayers of the blessing are recited, walk through the house and bless each room by sprinkling with Epiphany/holy water and incensing it.

Take the blessed chalk and first write the initials of the three Wise Men, connected with Crosses, over the inside of your front door (on the lintel, if possible). Then write the year, breaking up the numbers and the year so that they fall on both sides of the initials. It should look like this, for example

20 C+M+B 20

with the "20" being the millennium and century, the "C" standing for the first Wise Man, Caspar, the "M" standing for Melchior, the "B" standing for Balthasar, and the "20" standing for the decade and year. It is also popularly believed that the Kings' initials stand for "Christus mansionem benedicat" ("Christ bless this house").

Adapted from an article by Dr. Peter Kwasniewski and other resources

EPIPHANY HYMNS

God rest ye merry, gentlemen

God rest ye merry, gentlemen
Let nothing you dismay
Remember, Christ, our Savior
Was born on Christmas day
To save us all from Satan's power
When we were gone astray
**O tidings of comfort and joy,
Comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy**

In Bethlehem, in Israel,
This blessed Babe was born
And laid within a manger
Upon this blessed morn
The which His Mother Mary
Did nothing take in scorn
Refrain

From God our Heavenly Father
A blessed Angel came;
And unto certain Shepherds
Brought tidings of the same:
How that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by Name.
Refrain

"Fear not then," said the Angel,
"Let nothing you affright,
This day is born a Savior
Of a pure Virgin bright,
To free all those who trust in Him
From Satan's power and might."
Refrain

The shepherds at those tidings
Rejoiced much in mind,
And left their flocks a-feeding
In tempest, storm and wind:
And went to Bethlehem straightway
The Son of God to find.
Refrain

And when they came to Bethlehem
Where our dear Savior lay,
They found Him in a manger,
Where oxen feed on hay;
His Mother Mary kneeling down,
Unto the Lord did pray.
Refrain

Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas
All other doth deface.
Refrain

O Come All Ye Faithful

O Come All Ye Faithful
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.
Come and behold Him,
Born the King of Angels;
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

O Sing, choirs of angels,
Sing in exultation,
Sing all that hear in heaven God's holy word.
Give to our Father glory in the Highest;
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

All Hail! Lord, we greet Thee,
Born this happy morning,
O Jesus! for evermore be Thy name adored.
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing;
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.