



THE PARISH

Chalking the Door

EPIPHANY

Entering Epiphany Together

For many of us, the Christmas season officially ends as we box up the last decorations and our lives return to business-as-usual. But for millions of Christians worldwide, the 12 days of Christmas come to an end with the celebration of *Epiphany* (also known as *Three Kings' Day*) on January 6th.

The custom seems to have originated with Christians from Alexandria in the early third century, and is a time to celebrate the magi who had an "Epiphany" moment as they visited the Christ Child, offered him their gifts, and worshiped him as King. After they "saw the Light"... nothing was ever the same.

This year, we invite our Parish family to join in on a fun and meaningful Epiphany tradition called "*Chalking the Door*." This is a way to celebrate the occasion of the Epiphany and to ask God's blessing on our lives, our homes, and those who visit our homes throughout the new year. It is rooted in the biblical stories where God commanded his people to mark their doors (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

The traditional practice is to simply gather outside, and write with chalk above the home's entryway or towards the top of your door:

20 + C + M + B + 21

The letters C, M, B have two meanings. First, they represent the traditional names of the Magi (Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar), which emerged in the church tradition during the sixth century. The initials "C, M, B" are also an abbreviation for the Latin words *Christus Mansionem Benedicat*, "May Christ Bless this Home." The "+" signs represent the cross, and the numbers to the left and right are the year. After marking the door, you can briefly explain this meaning and have a moment of prayer to ask God's blessing. Consider using this prayer as a guide:

"Lord, May our hearts and our house be a home where you are daily welcomed. Bless all who visit and live here with the gifts of your life and your love. Grant us health, joy, and wholeness throughout this year. Guide, comfort, and strengthen in peace all who come and go through this doorway. Make this house a shelter in the storm and a place of comfort and rest for all in need of your warmth and care. May the light of the star that once guided the Magi to worship you now guide us to see you in the epiphanies of the ordinary, daily experiences of our lives. Amen."

A Family Tradition

To make this a really memorable tradition for little ones, the fun can begin on the Eve of Epiphany (Jan 5th).

At bed-time, tell the kids that tomorrow is “3 Kings Day” and have the kids place their shoes by the front door. The shoes are not only a reminder of the Magi’s long journey, but also a way of showing Jesus that we are ready and willing to join the wise men on that journey to find and worship our King. Some families even leave a carrot or some “hay” for the camels. Camels are known for being a bit sloppy and leaving a trail of hay behind that children can often follow to their gifts!

When the kids wake up in the morning, they’ll find one last small gift or treat with their shoes. After opening the gift, grab a chair or let them climb onto your shoulders and announce that, “It is time to Chalk the Door!”

Depending on how many have gathered, everyone can participate and have their turn chalking the door. If they are too young to write, you can guide their hand or they can mark the “+” in between the letters.

Before praying and asking God’s blessing on your home, explain that throughout this year, you want your house to be a place where Christ feels at home.

To make sure they understand this, you can ask them:

- ▶ *What kind of house do you think Jesus would feel at home in?*
- ▶ *What kind of words would be spoken there?*
- ▶ *How would people live and play together in that home?*
- ▶ *How can we help others feel welcome in this home?*

We hope Chalking the Door becomes a meaningful family tradition to help you fully celebrate Christmas and enter Epiphany Season intentionally.