



Chalking the Door: An Epiphany Tradition

“Bless this house and all who inhabit it. Fill us with the light of Christ, that our concern for others may reflect your love.”

What Is Chalking the Door?

This short liturgy is a way of marking our homes, usually at the front or main entrance, with sacred signs and symbols as we ask God’s blessing upon those who live, work, or visit throughout the coming year. In Exodus, the Israelites marked their doors with blood so that the Lord would pass over their homes; but in this service, we mark our doors with chalk as a sign that we have invited God’s presence and blessing into our homes

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.” Chalking the door is a tangible way to honor God in our lives.

What Do the Numbers and Letters Mean?

The first and last numbers simply refer 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!”

How To Do It

1. **Mark your calendar:** Epiphany is on January 6th, twelve days after Christmas. In Great Britain, chalking the door takes place on Twelfth-Night, January 5th, the eve of Epiphany. Many families gather in their homes to celebrate with friends, food, singing, and gifts... and to chalk the door.
2. **Find some chalk:** Any color will do!
3. **Gather your household:** Everyone should be involved. For those who live alone, consider inviting a friend or neighbor. Or gather at your church to chalk the church entrance.
4. **Pray:** Use the prayers and liturgy below.
5. **Write the inscription:** Using the chalk, and taking turns, make the following inscription above the outside of your door.

20 + C + M + B + 21

Make sure to change the last number to the current year.

Liturgy & Prayers 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 leader says:

The three Wise Men, [C] Caspar, [M] Melchior, [B] and Balthasar followed the star to Bethlehem and the child Jesus [20] two thousand, [20] and twenty years ago. [+ +] May Christ bless our home [+ +], and remain with us throughout the new year. Amen.

All say the Lord's Prayer.