



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, and this is when chalking the door is often done. Or, in Great Britain, chalking the door takes place on Twelfth Night, January 5th, the eve of Epiphany. You may also wish to chalk the door on Epiphany Sunday after church. God will bless your choice!
2. *Find some chalk:* Any color will do! If you live in a community that you feel might frown upon your use of chalk, you could use paper and marker and make a sign to hang up.

3. *Gather your household:* For families, everyone should be involved. For those who live alone, you may do this in solitude or consider inviting a friend or neighbor.
4. *Pray:* You may use the liturgy and prayers below.

Peace be to this house, and to all who enter here. Amen.

Then one or more of the following prayers may be 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.

5. *Write the inscription:* Using the chalk and taking turns if more than one is participating, make the following inscription above the outside of your door:

20 + C + M + B + 22

As you make the inscription say these words: *The three Wise Men, Caspar [KAS per], Melchior [MEL key ore], and Balthasar [bal THAY zer] followed the star to Bethlehem and the baby Jesus two thousand and twenty-one years ago. May Christ bless our home and remain with us throughout the New Year. Amen.*

6. *End with The Lord's Prayer:*

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 us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.