

Here is a house blessing for the New Year or Epiphany. I have drawn by hand the cross and the Chi Rho (an ancient Christian symbol). We make copies of this and put them folded into a zip-lock bag with a piece of chalk. We handed them out at our fall bazaar and will hand the rest out on Christmas Eve. We intentionally kept the liturgy simple to help it appeal to many persons, not just Episcopalians.

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Blessing of Homes at New Year's

Background: A part of church history is the custom of blessing homes at the New Year. A family would hold a short service of prayer to ask God's blessing on their dwellings and on all who live, work with and visit them. In this way, we invite Jesus to be a "guest" in our home, a listener to each conversation, a guide for troubled times, and a blessing in times of thanksgiving.

"Chalking the door" or the door step may be used as a way to celebrate and literally "mark" the occasion. In the Old Testament the Israelites were told to mark their doors with the blood of the lamb on the night of the Passover to ensure that the angel of death would pass them by. Deuteronomy 6: 9 says that we shall "write [the words of God] on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, ... and you shall write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates."

Chalk is made of the substance of the earth and is used by teachers to instruct and by children to play. As the image of the chalk fades, we will remember the sign we have made and transfer it to our hearts and our habits.

The following form may be used by your family to mark the door of your own home at this holy season. You may assign parts to read and respond as you wish; keep in mind that the leader can be an adult or a child. This blessing can also be used by a single person, omitting the words in the brackets and changing the personal pronouns in the italics.

An Epiphany House Blessing

Leader: The Lord be with you.

Response: And also with you.

Leader: Arise, shine, for your light has come and the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed.

Response: And all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

Leader: Let us pray.
Visit, O blessed Lord, this home with the gladness of your presence.
Bless all who live here with the gift of your love; and grant that they may manifest your love [to each other and] to all whose lives they touch.
May they grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of you;
guide, comfort, and strengthen them in peace, O Jesus Christ,
now and for ever. Amen.

At this time you may use chalk to draw the symbols and date on the door or door step:



Cross

2005

Year



Chi Rho
(Symbol of Jesus)

Leader: May God the Father, who by Baptism adopts us as his children,
grant us grace.
May God the Son, who sanctified a home at Nazareth, fill us with love.
May God the Holy Spirit, who has made the Church one family,
keep us in peace.

Response: Amen!