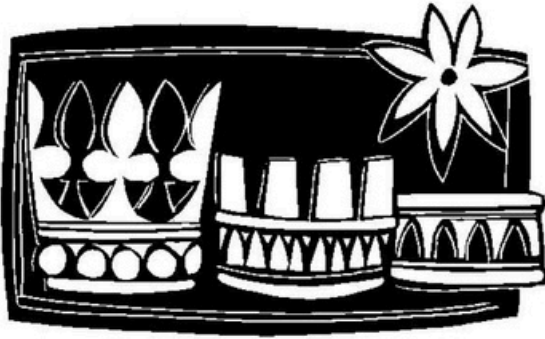


EPIPHANY AND CHALKING OF THE DOORWAY



January 6 is the Feast of the Epiphany, sometimes called "Three Kings Day," and comes in between Christmas (or Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord - a Holy day of Obligation) and the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the final day of the Christmas Season. Since 1970 in the United States the date has been transferred to the second Sunday after Christmas, in this case January 4, 2026.

In some cultures, January 6 is a large and festive celebration, even larger than Christmas.

The Gospel of Matthew tells us this is the day the magi ("kings") arrived in Bethlehem, directed by angels and guided by a star, bringing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to Jesus.

Gold symbolized Jesus as a king. Frankincense and myrrh are sweet-smelling resins that were burned as sacred offerings and during burials.

Matthew 2:1-12

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star^{at} at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet:

'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
since from you shall come a ruler,
who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"



Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

This holy mystery invites us to wonder who the magi are and how their sacred story intersects with our own. Who or what is leading you to God incarnate? Which stars will you follow this year and what road will you take? What gifts will you offer?

To invite God's blessing on a home, church, and on all who enter its doors during the year the following is inscribed in chalk on the inside, usually above the door on the inside of the lintel

20 + C + M + B + 26

The numbers change to reflect the new calendar year. The letters C, M, and B are given two meanings: the initials of the traditional names of the three magi, Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, and the initials of the Latin phrase *Christus Mansionem Benedicat*, which means, "Christ bless this dwelling." The + symbols are for the Cross of Christ.



Seeing the symbols over our door during the year reminds us, even as life goes back to a regular routine after Christmas, that our homes and all those who dwell there belong to Christ. They are also reminders of the welcome the magi gave to Jesus. Who might we welcome into our hearts this coming year? With time the chalk will fade. As it does, we let the meaning of the written symbols sink into the depths of our hearts and manifest in our words and actions.

Before, during, or after the chalking of the doorway, one or all of the following prayers might be offered:

May all who pass through this doorway rejoice to find Christ living among us. May we seek and serve in everyone we meet that same Jesus, word incarnate, now and forever. Amen

O God of Stars and Journeys, we ask your blessing on this threshold. May all whose journeys lead them through these doors be blessed with health, generosity of spirit, a joyful heart, and deep peace. O God of Welcome, may all who enter this doorway rejoice to find Christ living among us, and may we seek and serve, in everyone we meet, that same Jesus who is the incarnate Word, now and forever. Amen

O God Among Us, may we be visited by angels, may we follow stars, may we bring the gifts we have to offer. May we embrace the journey and travel in love. May Christ bless our homes and find a home in our hearts throughout the year. Amen.