

EPIPHANY

BLESSING OF THE HOME

On Epiphany Sunday come to Mass with the items listed below in a small bag. Leave the bag open during Mass so that the items will be blessed:

- Piece of chalk
- Small bottle of water (remove the lid during the blessing)
- Incense (frankincense and myrrh)
- Gold (your wedding rings for example)

Upon entering the house:

LEADER: Peace be to this house.

All: And to all who dwell herein.

LEADER From the east came the Magi to Bethlehem to adore the Lord; and opening their treasures they offered precious gifts: gold for the great King, incense for the true God, and myrrh in symbol of His burial. **LIGHT THE INCENSE**

LEADER: Let us pray. Bless, O Lord God almighty, this home, that in it there may be health, purity, peace, humility, goodness and mercy, the fulfillment of Thy law, the thanksgiving to God the Creator and to Jesus the Christ and to the Holy Spirit. And may this blessing remain upon this home and upon all who dwell herein. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

After the prayers of the blessing are recited, walk through the house and bless each room by sprinkling with Epiphany water and incensing it.

Take the blessed chalk and first write the initials of the three Wise Men, connected with Crosses, over the inside of your front door (on the lintel, if possible). Then write the year, breaking up the numbers and the year so that they fall on both sides of the initials. It should look like this, for ex.:

20 C+M+B 09

with the "20" being the millennium and century, the "C" standing for the first Wise Man, Caspar, the "M" standing for Melchior, the "B" standing for Balthasar, and the "09" standing for the decade and year. It is also popularly believed that the Kings' initials also stand for "Christus mansionem benedicat" ("Christ bless this house").

It is customary in some religious orders to choose a new patron Saint today for the coming year. Families can do this, too, choosing a new Saint by designating someone (e.g., father or mother, etc.) to select the new Patron, by determining by lots who will select the new patron, by

having family members write down their choices and choosing at random, by allowing the person to choose who presents the best argument for a particular Patron, etc. It would be very beneficial if the person who chooses teaches the rest of the family about that particular Patron, perhaps looking up the Saint in Butler's works, finding art work depicting the Saint, etc., and sharing it.

As to foods, the bread-like Three Kings Cake is eaten on this day. In some cultures (e.g., Mexico), whoever finds the piece with the trinket (usually shaped like Baby Jesus) inside has to host the [Candlemas](#) party. A recipe:

Three Kings Cake

Cake:

1/4 cup butter or margarine
1 (16 ounce) container sour cream
1/3 cup sugar
1 teaspoon salt
2 (1/4 oz.) envelopes active dry yeast
1 tablespoon white sugar
1/2 cup warm water (100 to 110 degrees)
2 eggs
6 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, divided
1/2 cup white sugar
1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1/3 cup butter, softened

Icing:

3 cups powdered sugar
3 tablespoons butter, melted
3 tablespoons milk
1/4 teaspoon vanilla extract

Trinket, almond, other nut
Colored sugars, if desired

Cook first 4 ingredients in a saucepan over low heat, stirring often, until butter melts. Cool mixture to 100 degrees to 110 degrees.

Dissolve yeast and 1 tablespoon sugar in 1/2 cup warm water in a large bowl; let stand 5 minutes. Add butter mixture, eggs, and 2 cups flour; beat at medium speed with an electric mixer 2 minutes or until smooth. Gradually stir in enough remaining flour to make a soft dough.

Turn dough onto a lightly floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic, about 10 minutes. Place in a well-greased bowl, turning to grease top. Cover and let rise in a warm place (85 degrees), free from drafts, 1 hour or until doubled in bulk. Stir together 1/2 cup sugar and cinnamon; set aside.

Punch dough down; divide in half. Turn 1 portion out onto a lightly floured surface; roll to a 28- x 10-inch rectangle. Spread half each of cinnamon mixture and softened butter on dough. Roll dough, jellyroll fashion, starting at long side. Place dough roll, seam side down, on a lightly greased baking sheet. Bring ends together to form an oval ring, moistening and pinching edges together to seal. Repeat with remaining dough, cinnamon mixture, and butter.

Cover and let rise in a warm place, free from drafts, 20 minutes or until doubled in bulk. Bake at 375 degrees for 15 minutes or until golden.

To finish: Make a tiny cut into the cake and hide a plastic or china trinket (shaped like Baby Jesus, if possible) inside (may substitute an almond or other nut). Mix the icing ingredients and do one of the following: 1) simply spread on cake (may dot with candied cherries), 2) spread on cake and then top with a colored sugar 3) spread on cake and sprinkle with alternating bands of colored sugar (in New Orleans, the traditional colors are green, gold, and purple).