

SEASONAL FEASTS & TRADITIONS

Baptism of Our Lord – On January 10th we observe the Baptism of Jesus, a traditional time for baptism and the renewal of our own vows (see p. 304-305 in the Book of Common Prayer).

- *In what aspect of your baptismal vow do you desire growth this year?*

The Presentation – On February 2 the church celebrates the Presentation of Jesus to God in the Temple, 40 days after his birth; it is also associated with the purification of Mary and an offering of thanksgiving by Jesus' parents. This date, at the mid-point of winter, is also known as “Candlemas,” the Feast of Lights, and a time when candles are often blessed for the coming year.

- *In what areas of your life do you seek God's purification?*
- *For what are you especially thankful?*
- *How can you be a bearer of Christ's Light?*

“Feasts” are religious holidays (“Holy Days” or “feriae”) and are associated with festivals and celebrations – practices important since early Christian communities.

Epiphany and the Season After the Epiphany last from January 6 until the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday (this year on February 17).

Resources: The Book of Common Prayer, Lesser Feasts and Fasts, Book of Occasional Services, episcopalchurch.org, beliefnet.com, Dictionary of the Christian Church (Hendrickson Publishing, 2007).

EPIPHANY

AT HOME

The Feast of the Epiphany: January 6

Epiphany concludes the 12 Days of Christmas, counting from December 25 to January 6. The name comes from the Greek word for revelation, Epiphania, and commemorates the revelation of Christ to the three wise men – are also known as “magi” or “kings” – who followed the star to see the Holy Child.

- *See Matthew 2:1-12.* This is the only biblical reference to the visit by wise men, and it does not specify a number of visitors or their location; translations vary on what they are called.

- Scripture references three precious gifts given to the Christ Child: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Some associate this with the tradition of giving gifts at Christmas. Gold is a symbol of divinity, frankincense is a fragrant offering, and myrrh is associated with bitterness and suffering (at Jesus' earthly death).

- By the 8th-9th centuries, the wise men were associated in the western Christian church with Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, scholars of Indian, Persian, and Arabian descent, respectively. They may have been astronomers, rather than kings.

- Some cultures refer to Epiphany as “Three Kings Day” or Día de los Reyes; others emphasize the end of Christmas, “The Twelfth Night,” which is known for its festive finale of Christmas before returning to routine work.

HOUSE BLESSINGS AND PRAYERS

Epiphany is a common time for house blessings, recalling the revelation and blessings on those visiting the Christ Child. In this pandemic, as we are spending so much time in our homes, you may find it especially meaningful this year to walk through your home and pray.

Prayer for the Home – Visit, O blessed Lord, this home, with the gladness of your presence, that you may be known to inhabit this dwelling. Bless all of who come into this space with the gift of your love; and grant that we may manifest your love to each other and to all whose lives we touch. May we grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of you, through Christ our Savior. Amen.

Bedroom – O God of life and love, the true rest of your people: Sanctify us/me, your servant(s), in hours of rest and refreshment, sleeping and waking; and grant that, strengthened by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, I/we may rise to serve you all my/our days; through Jesus Christ you Lord. Amen.

Kitchen – O Lord our God, you supply every need of ours according to your great riches: Fill the hands that work in this place with your blessings, and give all who are fed here grateful hearts for daily bread; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bathroom – O holy God, in the incarnation of your Son our Lord you made our flesh the instrument of your self-revelation: Give us a proper respect and reverence for our mortal bodies, keeping them clean and fair, whole and sound; that, glorifying you in them, we may confidently await our being clothed upon with spiritual bodies, when that which is mortal is transformed by life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer at a Child's Room – Holy and loving God, your Son Jesus took young children into his arms and blessed them: Embrace the child/children whose room this is with your unfailing love, protect them from all danger, and bring them in safety to each new day, until they greet with joy the great day of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHALKING THE DOOR

This tradition dates to the Middle Ages, and remembers the journey the wise men made to visit Jesus, and the hope we carry for Jesus to visit us in our homes.

20 * C + M + B * 21

The entry door, or the lintel above the door, is “chalked,” inscribing it with the initials for the three magi, bracketed with the century and year. C+M+B represents Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, and is also associated with Christus Mansionem Benedicat, “May Christ Bless this Dwelling.”

TIP: Test a small spot on your door or door frame, using ordinary chalk, which should wipe away easily. If the door and frame are light in color, tape a piece of dark-colored paper in an appropriate spot for chalking the inscription.

Prayers and scripture readings may accompany the chalking of the door (see following pages). At the end, it is appropriate for someone to say:

“May the Lord watch over our going out and our coming in, from this time forth and forevermore.”

All may respond, “Amen.”