

Epiphany • Christ the King • January 3-4, 2009

Today we celebrate the Epiphany. If you look up the definition of the word, Epiphany, you find:

epiph·a·ny

noun

1 *capitalized* : a church festival in commemoration of the coming of the Magi.

2: an appearance or manifestation especially of a divine being

3a (1): a usually sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or meaning of something (2): an intuitive grasp of reality through something (as an event) usually simple and striking (3): an illuminating discovery, realization, or disclosure **b**: a revealing scene or moment.

Today we celebrate the realization of Emmanuel, God-with-us. Where do we discover God? Where do we realize God in our daily lives?

The story of the Magi reminds us that should be looking for and finding the Lord everywhere. But this seeing takes practice. So, let's begin where the Magi ended, not in a palace, a temple, or even a church. Their search ended in the home of Mary and Joseph. It was over a home that the star shone and angles sang. It was in a home that the kings bearing gold, frankincense and myrrh bowed down in homage. It was in a home that God came to earth.

One of our perhaps forgotten traditions is the blessing of our homes, especially on Epiphany. This a blessing the family can do together. Each member of the family can take a figure from the nativity scene as visit each room.

While singing, maybe even *We Three Kings*, walk from room to room, blessing them one by one. The person who lives or works chiefly in that room gets to bless it with water.

Perhaps, one of the children will pray for privacy in their room, with a meaningful look thrown toward a parent. Mom and Dad may silently pray for holy order and wonder how God will sort it, and them, out as sprinkled water falls on piles of unfolded clothing and scattered books.

Don't forget the bathroom. And make sure to bless the kitchen. The kitchen feeds so many in so many ways. It holds the family, even as it welcomes newcomers and strangers who become our brothers and sisters.

The blessing ends at the front door. The Gospel tells us that the magi found Christ, "on entering the house." The door to your home is a holy threshold. Bless those who come in and go out by inscribing above the door in chalk the first two numbers of the year, then the letters, C+M+B and the last two numbers of the year. This year it will read 20 + C + M + B + 09. Tradition tells us that the letters stand for the names of the magi: Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar. It also stands for "*Christus mansionem benedicat*" or "May Christ bless this dwelling".

We pray that those who enter in might find, as did the magi on their journey, the true and ever-living Christ.

It takes practice to recognize Christ in all the places and faces where he is to be found. It takes work to remember that Christ is found in the most familiar faces, too, the ones most likely to be

found yelling at one another over room not at the inn but at the
sink, over borrowed clothes and lost keys.

Christ came first to a house and to the people dwelling there. May
we find the Lord, right where we live!

*Adapted from Epiphany: The Glory of God Appears and Blesses Us Right Where We Live. By Melissa
Musick Nussbaum. Celebration, January 2006.*