

BLESSINGS FOR CATHOLIC FAMILY HOMES

Christmas . Epiphany . Ordinary Time in Winter

It is invigorating to create new family traditions and to continue to practice some of our time-honored Catholic traditions in creative ways. When we gather in celebration, we invite God to join our family in prayer, rituals of blessing, conversation, and playfulness. We recall that we are part of Christ's family, united with our spiritual ancestors and our sisters and brothers around the globe as imitators of Jesus. Christ is with us. He waits for us at the center of our home, our sanctuary. May these blessings & prayers bring us ever closer to our Lord and to each other, in warmth, peace and love.

"I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me". (Philippians 4:13)



Blessing of a Christmas Tree

(from *Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers*,
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, pgs. 78-81)

When the tree has been prepared and decorated, the household gathers around it. A blessing can take place prior to lighting the tree for the first time or at any time.

All: (make the Sign of the Cross) In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Leader: Let us glorify Christ, our light, who brings salvation and peace into our midst, now and forever.

All: Amen.

Leader: My brothers and sisters, amidst signs and wonders, Christ Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea: his birth brings joy to our hearts and enlightenment to our minds. With this tree, decorated and adorned, may we welcome Christ among us; may its lights guide us to the perfect light.

Reader: Listen to the words of St. Paul in his letter to Titus (3:4-7):

But when the kindness and generous love of God our Savior appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in the hope of eternal life.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God. (brief silence)

Leader: Let us ask God to send his blessing upon us and upon this sign of our faith in the Lord.

All: Lord, give light to our hearts.

Leader: That the peace of Christ may dwell in our hearts and in the world, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, give light to our hearts.

Leader: Lord God, let your blessing come upon us as we illumine this tree. May the light and cheer it gives be a sign of the joy that fills our hearts. May all who delight in this tree come to the knowledge and joy of salvation. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Time to light the Christmas tree!



Blessing of a Christmas Manger or Nativity Scene

(from *Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers*,
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, pgs.82-84)

In its present form the custom of displaying figures depicting the birth of Jesus Christ owes its origin to St. Francis of Assisi. He made the Christmas Crèche, or manger for Christmas Eve of 1223.

The blessing of the Christmas manger or nativity scene may take place on the Vigil of Christmas or at another suitable time. When the manger is set up in the home, it is appropriate that it be blessed by a parent or another family member.



All: (make the Sign of the Cross) In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

All: Who made heaven and earth.

Reader: Listen to God's Word from the holy Gospel according Luke, Chapter 2 verses 1 through 8:

In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So, all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock.

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Leader: God of every nation and people, from the very beginning of creation you have made manifest your love: when our need for a Savior was great you sent your Son to be born of the Virgin Mary. To our lives He brings joy and peace, justice, mercy, and love. Lord, bless all who look upon this manger; may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus, and raise our thoughts to Him, who is 'God with us' and Savior of all, and who lives and reigns forever and ever.

All: Amen

CHRISTMAS

Christ, our Savior, is born!



Creche photo complements of the Hebert Family

Feast of the Holy Family

December 26, 2021

The Feast Day of the Holy Family falls on the Sunday after Christmas. On this day, we consecrate our family to the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary & Joseph. Each family is diverse, and the one element which is sacred to all families is the call to love. Strong and faith-filled families are the foundation for a healthy and holy community. May we all model ourselves after the love of the Holy Family and ask for their intercession for holiness.

FESTIVE CHRISTMAS MEAL PRAYER

On Christmas eve or morning, there is a traditional ritual of lighting and placing a white candle in our home. The candle is often placed in the center of the Advent wreath. The white candle is a visible sign which celebrates Jesus as the Light of the World. Lighting the candle and offering a brief prayer before our Christmas meal will focus our family on Christmas as a special day of gratitude and celebration. For Catholics, the Christmas meal is an extension of the celebration of the Catholic Mass. We welcome all who gather at our table, our home altar, where God is always present.

All: (make the Sign of the Cross) In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
Leader: God of love, we gather around this table on this Christmas day to thank you for the Word of God and the Holy Communion which nourish us. We thank you, Light of the World, for your message of hope. Out of Love, Your Son was born as an infant in a poor manger. As the angels announced his birth to the shepherds, we also, the church, the people of God, proclaim his birth to the world as a reminder that you became one of us so that we could become more like you. We receive your gift of peace as we ask you to bless this food, and all of us, in our celebration. We ask this in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.



Family Prayer

Heavenly Father,
We come before You to praise You and to thank You for the great gift of the family. Sustain all families and make them aware of the path to holiness upon which You call them, so that they might experience Your infinite mercy and find new ways to grow in love and service to the world. Amen.

Adapted from the official prayer for the X World Meeting of Families, June 22-26, 2022

The EPIPHANY : January 8, 2023—Sunday celebration; January 6—feast day

“...for today, I must stay at your house...” (Luke 19:5)

Blessing of the Home and Household on the Epiphany

(from *Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers*, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops –USCCB)

Whether or not a nativity scene is still displayed after Christmas day, display the 3 wise men, or magi, as they “come for a visit” in our home. The Magi represent all of us, God’s diverse peoples, who seek, in wonder and hope, to discover the presence of Christ on earth. The Magi represent each of us:

- * **bearer** of gifts that we give in our own time and in our own ways;
- * **receiver** of the most treasured gift we receive from God: Himself!

Gathering around the figures of the three kings and open a bible to Luke 19:1-9 to read from during the prayer.

Leader: Let us praise God, who fills our hearts and homes with peace.

All: Blessed be God forever.

Leader: The Word became flesh and made his dwelling place among us. It is Christ who enlightens our hearts and homes with his love. May all who enter this home find Christ’s life and love.

Reader: Listen to the words of the holy Gospel according to Luke 19:1-9:

He came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town. Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man, was seeking to see who Jesus was; but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. So, he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, who was about to pass that way. When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house.” And he came down quickly and received him with joy. When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying, “He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner.” But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone, I shall repay it four times over.” And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham. The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Leader: Lord Jesus Christ, the three kings presented their gifts to you in praise and adoration: grant that those living in this home may use their talents and abilities to your greater glory. May Christ dwell with us, keep us from all harm, and make us one in mind and spirit, now and forever.

All: Amen.



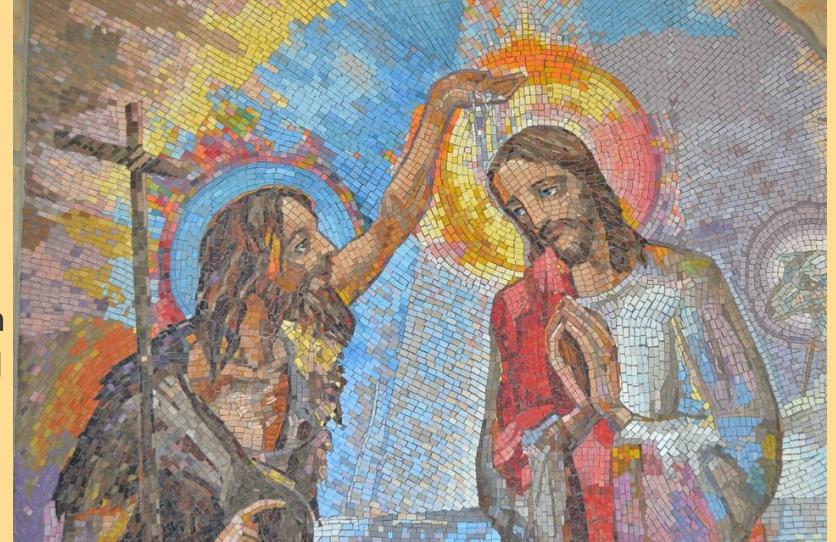
Star of Bethlehem (1887-1891—Sir Edward Burne-Jones)

BAPTISM OF OUR LORD: January 9, 2023

Gospel Reading: Matthew 3:13-17

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS is another manifestation of Christ, another epiphany. Christ's Baptism marks the beginning of his adult mission on earth. We are reminded that our own Baptism was the beginning of our mission as Christians.

In our Catholic church, this day marks a transition from the Christmas season to Ordinary Time. In a way, today's feast is the high point of the Christmas season. Before Jesus' birth, angels announced to Mary and to Joseph who Jesus would be. At his birth, the shepherds and the Magi recognize Jesus as the Messiah. At his Baptism, Jesus accepts that he is God's son and he inaugurates the mission of fulfilling his Father's will.



FAMILY TOGETHER



We share conversation: As baptized Christians, what do we learn from Jesus about our own mission on earth as his disciples?

We act with love: Place each family member's name on a slip of paper and put the names in a bowl. Invite each person in the family to choose another family member's name and to prepare a spoken or written message for that person, affirming their importance in God's eyes and in your family life. Pray together that your family will continue to support one another in your baptismal promises to be disciples of Jesus and then invite each person to read or speak aloud the message she/he has prepared.

We pray: Conclude by praying together the Lord's Prayer.

(Text adaptation from Loyola Press resource; free images—unsplash.com, pixabay.com)

SPIRITUAL WARMTH & LIGHT

CANDLEMAS (February 2, 2023) Receiving Blessed Candles at Home

On February 2, forty days after Christmas, the Church celebrates the *Feast of the Presentation of the Lord* (see the Gospel of Luke 2:22-40). Because it echoes the Christmas festival, this day is a celebration of light in darkness. Its Gospel tells of the old man Simeon's calling the infant Jesus a "*light to the Gentiles and the glory of your people, Israel*".

For centuries, the Church has blessed candles on this day. Because of its simplicity and beauty, candles are used when the Church gathers for prayer, both in public places and in the home. One or more of the candles is lighted. These candles are lighted at ordinary times (at dinner, for example) and special times such as during the Anointing of the Sick or when Holy Communion is brought to a member of the family.

Holy scripture may be read: Gospel of Luke 2:25, 27-32

All make the sign of the cross and share a prayer:

Leader: Jesus Christ is the Light of the World, a light no darkness can overpower. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

All: Now and forever.

Leader: In the beauty of these candles, keep us in quiet and in peace, keep us safe and turn our hearts to you that we may ourselves be light for our world. All praise be yours, through Christ, the light of the nations, the glory of Israel, forever and ever.

All: Amen



(USCCB Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers)

SPIRITUAL WARMTH & LIGHT

Catholic Home Blessing

Winter is a beautiful time to gather loved ones to experience the warmth of a blessing of our home, apartment, condo, or dorm room. In the absence of a priest, our church encourages us to bless our living sanctuary. Obtain holy water from your local parish church and place it, along with a crucifix, in the room you will first gather in. At your discretion, dim the lights and light one or more candles (wax or flameless). All make the sign of the cross.

Leader: Peace be with this home and with all who live here. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

All: Amen.

The leader may use these or similar words to introduce the house blessing:

Be our shelter, Lord, when we are at home; our companion, when we are away;
and our welcome guest, when we return. And at last, receive us into the dwelling place
you have prepared for us in your Father's house, where you live for ever and ever.

All: Amen. (All make the sign of the cross)



Scripture Reading: A reading from the letter of Paul to the Colossians 3:15-17.

Leader: The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

All recite the Lord's Prayer. All make the sign of the cross. Participants may bless each other with holy water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

*If desired, all go from room to room, using some of the following prayers and marking the room with holy water.

At the entrance: O God, protect our going out and our coming in; Let us share the hospitality of this home with all who visit us, that those who enter here may know your love and peace. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

In the living room: O God, give your blessings to all who share this room, that we may be knit together in companionship. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

In the kitchen: O God, you fill the hungry with good things. Send your blessing on us, as we work in this kitchen, and make us ever thankful for our daily bread. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

In the dining room: Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth, for you give us food and drink to sustain our lives and make our hearts glad. Help us to be grateful for all your mercies, and mindful of the needs of others. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

In the bedrooms: Protect us, Lord, as we stay awake; watch over us as we sleep, that awake we may keep watch with Christ, and asleep, we may rest in his peace. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Plan a special celebration after the blessings.