

THE YEAR AS A HOUSE: A BLESSING

Think of the year
as a house:
door flung wide
in welcome,
threshold swept
and waiting,
a graced spaciousness
opening and offering itself
to you.

Let it be blessed
in every room.
Let it be hallowed
in every corner.
Let every nook
be a refuge
and every object
set to holy use.

Let it be here
that safety will rest.
Let it be here
that health will make its home.
Let it be here
that peace will show its face.
Let it be here
that love will find its way.

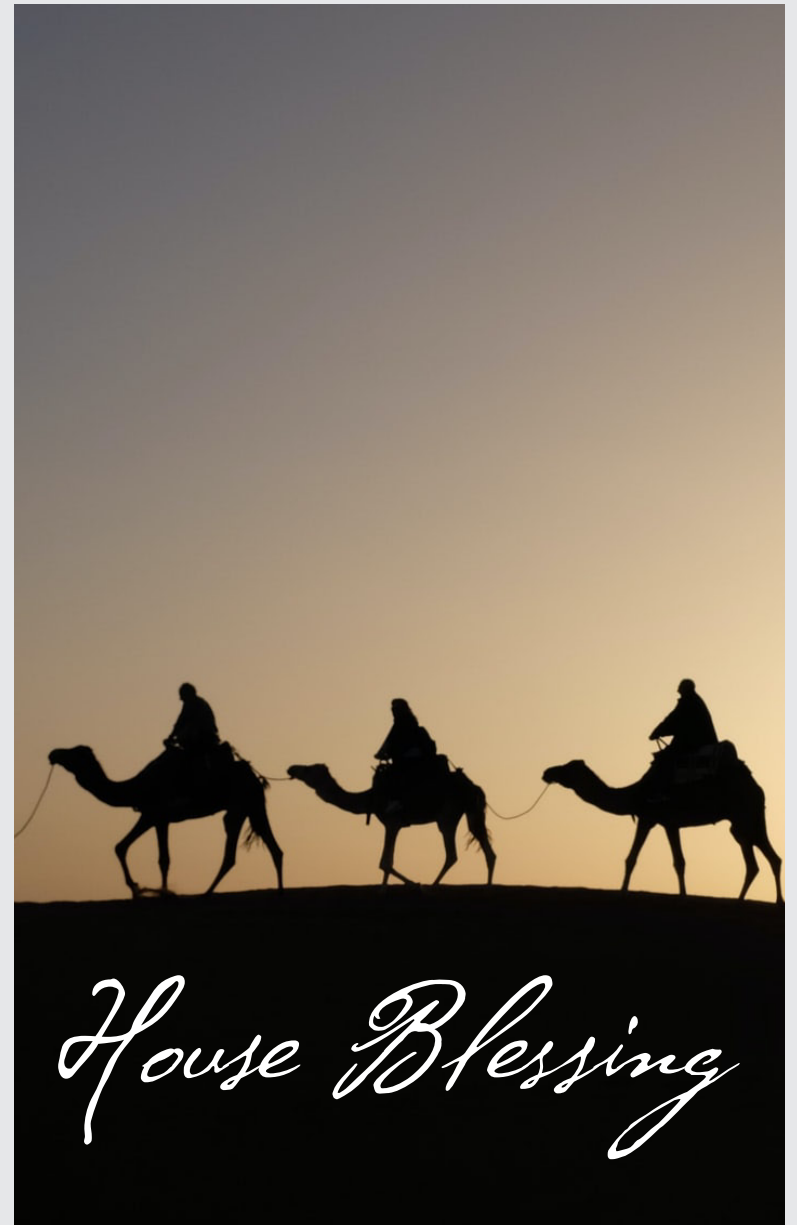
Here
let the weary come
let the aching come
let the lost come
let the sorrowing come.

Here
let them find their rest
and let them find their
soothing
and let them find their place
and let them find their delight.

And may it be
in this house of a year
that the seasons will spin in
beauty,
and may it be
in these turning days
that time will spiral with joy.

And may it be
that its rooms will fill
with ordinary grace
and light spill from every
window
to welcome the stranger
home.

Jan Richardson



HOUSE BLESSING

Epiphany arrives the day after the Twelfth Day of Christmas. It's the day we remember the Magi and their journey of faith. We remember the star that guided them to the place where the Christ Child lay. We remember how they were overwhelmed with joy when they found him, how they knelt down to adore him, and how they gave him their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

In recent years, on the Saturday evening closest to Epiphany, many of us have gathered for an evening service at the church to celebrate this holiday. We tell the story of the Magi and their gifts. We sing their carol, We Three Kings. We lift our voices together for the "star of wonder, star of light." Then we take a candlelit walk through the church building, blessing every space with light and love – the classrooms, the offices, Plymouth Hall, the Chapel, the Sanctuary, the whole house.

In this time of pandemic when our church house has largely remained empty and our own houses have served as sanctuaries in new ways, we invite you to take a few moments and bless your home as we enter a new year. Use the candle and the House Blessing we've given you and take your own journey, bringing the light to bless every room.

Give thanks to God for home, for shelter, for safety, and for every kind of comfort and companionship, large and small. And if this time at home has been difficult for you, a time of stress and worry, frustration and isolation, may this moment of prayer bring you sustenance, hope, and the promise of a day that is coming when we will find relief and release.

Epiphany also marks the occasion of a time-honored Christian tradition of "chalking the doors." The formula for the ritual – adapted for 2021 – is simple: take chalk of any color and write the following above or beside the entrance to your home:

20 + C + M + B + 21.

The letters have two meanings. First, they represent the initials of the legendary names of the Magi – Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. They also abbreviate the Latin phrase, *Christus mansionem benedicat*: "May Christ bless the house."

As you write the letters in chalk above your door, offer a blessing:

Peace be to this house, and to all who enter here. Bless all who call this home and all who come to visit with health, with goodness, with gentleness, and with peace. Fill all who dwell here with the light of Christ that we may become more like him, all light from light so that we will take that light with us and shine it everywhere we go.

