

## Feast of Mary, Mother of God, January 1<sup>st</sup>

This oldest feast of Mary, comes on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the Octave of Christmas, the World Day of Peace and at the start of a new year. It is a powerful reminder to us of the presence of Mary in the life of the Church and in our lives. Mary is our



mother, too, and we can turn to her in every moment of need, knowing that she will intercede with God for us. *Take time today to pause and think of what Mary means to you personally and to pray a Hail Mary. Mary, Mother of God, pray for us. Mary, Queen of Peace, pray for us. Mary, Helper of all in need, pray for us.*



## Feast of Epiphany, January 6<sup>th</sup>

### Chalking the Door of the Home on Epiphany

An Epiphany tradition in parts of Europe is for people to write a special sign in chalk over their front door, as a reminder of the Magi that visited the baby Jesus. It's made using the year split in two, with the initials of the names that are sometimes given to the Magi, Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar, in the middle. So, 2024 is written as: 20+C+M+B+24. The initials CMB also stand for the Latin phrase, *Christus mansionem benedicat*: 'May Christ bless the house'. The inscription is performed as a request for Christ to bless the home and be with all those who dwell in it throughout the year.

### Prayer as you chalk the lintel of your front door

*Gather at the front door of your home.*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

God of Light, bless our home. Make it a haven of rest for all in need of your warmth and care. And when we go out from this place, may we never lose sight of that Epiphany star.

We mark our door with the symbols of the Magi. **20 + C + M + B + 24**

May all who enter throughout the year find love and light; for Christ has come to dwell in this home and in our hearts. Amen.

*Having marked your door you may now like to place the Magi figures at the crib while praying the following:*

Loving Jesus, may we be like the Magi and always look for you in our lives. Be with us, protect us and guide us. Help us to always show your love to one another and to all in need. Amen.

*You may wish to conclude by singing or listening to a recording of 'We Three Kings' or another favourite Christmas Carol.*



## Keeping Christmas in the Home and Parish

This Christmas the parish invites you to enter into the prayer of the traditional 12 days of Christmas and to mark these days in your home, as well as in our church. Families are invited to make time in the home for prayer and to visit the church for private prayer before the crib.

In recent years we have come to realise even more the importance of the 'domestic church' that is very much alive in homes across the parish and diocese. God is always with us when we pray and so, we are very happy to share with you some prayers for the home. They were produced by Faith Development Services and the Diocesan Commission for Liturgical Formation. We hope you will use them over the Christmas season. And we look forward to you joining us in the parish for the celebrations that mark the season of Christmas.

***This leaflet contains the following prayers for use in the home over Christmas:***

- + ***Christmas Eve – Prayer for placing figure of Jesus in the crib***
- + ***Christmas Day – Prayer before your Family Christmas Meal***
- + ***A Prayer at the Crib for the 12 days of Christmas***
- + ***Feast of the Holy Family – A Family Prayer***
- + ***Feast of Mary, Mother of God (January 1) – Prayer suggestion***
- + ***Epiphany – Prayer for chalking your front door and placing Magi at the crib***

**May the blessing of Christmas  
bring God's peace, love, healing, joy and hope  
to your homes and hearts this year, and to our world.**

## Christmas Eve, December 24th

### Placing Jesus in the Crib on Christmas Eve Night



There is a lovely tradition of placing the figure of the baby Jesus in the crib on Christmas Eve, before children go to bed. Often the youngest member of the household gets this honour! If you are joining in a Christmas Mass via technology, before Mass begins, light a candle and place the figure of Jesus beside it. All present can process to the crib scene in the home at the end of Mass.

### Prayer at the Crib

*The youngest member of the family holds the infant figure during this prayer.*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Loving God,  
as we look upon our family crib we thank you for all who are part of the Christmas story and part of our story, too.  
As we look upon these animals, we thank you for the gift of creation and the beauty of the world you have created.  
We thank you for the shepherds and we remember that it was they who were looked down on by society who were the first to hear the good news of Christmas.  
We thank you for Mary and for Joseph, who trusted in you and did what you asked. And finally, we thank you for the gift of Jesus, your Son, who was born like us, lived like us, struggled like us, and who has shown us how to be fully human. As we place this figure of Jesus in our crib may it be a sign of Your presence in our lives.

*The figure can be placed in the crib at this point.*

Emmanuel, God with us, come to each of us and stay with us.  
Protect us and guide us as a family, free us from any worry and let your love grow in our hearts  
so that we may be Emmanuel, God with us, to one another over these Christmas days and beyond. Amen.

*You may wish to conclude by singing or listening to a recording of 'Away in a Manger' or another favourite Christmas carol.*

## Feast of the Nativity, Christmas Day, December 25th

### A Prayer before your Family Christmas Meal

Loving God, on this Christmas day we give thanks that Jesus, your Son, has come into our world bringing us gifts of peace and joy. Bless us as we sit down together at this table for our Christmas meal. Bless the food we share and help us to remember those who are hungry. Be with our neighbours and our friends, those who are lonely, sick or away from home. We pray that our departed loved ones may sit now at your table in heaven. May the joy of this feast give us strength and light, now and in the days ahead. Amen.



### A Prayer at the Crib for the 12 Days of Christmas

*As you visit your church you may wish to pray the following prayer.*

God, our Father, as we look upon this crib, we thank you for all who are part of the Christmas story and our story, too. We thank you for the gift of Jesus, your Son, who was born like us, lived like us, struggled like us, and who has shown us how to be fully human; to our lives, he brings joy and peace, justice, mercy, and love. May this crib be a beacon of hope for us and for the whole world as we face the coming days with courage and renewed strength. May the star of Bethlehem which shone brightly over the first crib stand guard over our home, filling it and all the earth with light and peace. And may we know, believe, and share the Christmas message of Emmanuel, God is with us. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

## Feast of the Holy Family, Sunday, December 31st

**A Prayer for the Family** God, our Father, we are brothers and sisters in Jesus your Son, one family, in the Spirit of your love. Bless us with the joy of love. Make us patient and kind, gentle and generous, welcoming to those in need. Help us to live your forgiveness and peace. Protect all families with your loving care, especially those for whom we now pray. (pause) Increase our faith, strengthen our hope, keep us safe in your love, make us always grateful for the gift of life that we share. This we ask, through Christ our Lord. Amen. Mary, mother and guide; pray for us. Saint Joseph, father and protector; pray for us. Saints Joachim and Anne; pray for us. Saints Louis and Zélie Martin; pray for us.

