

BLESSINGS
— FOR THE —
HOME

Honoring God's Presence
in *Every* Room

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Blessing our homes is an old and venerable Catholic tradition, especially at Epiphany and Easter. Led by the parish priest or by a family member, the family often goes from room to room, noting how each room is used and connecting that use to our Christian faith and mission.

Let's borrow from that great old tradition and spiritually walk through our houses, even without leaving our most comfortable chair. We can do this anytime. Let's stop in each room to consider how faith is alive in these spaces, to increase our awareness of how God is working in ordinary things, and to pray for God's abundant blessings.

Before we start, however, there are two important things to remember:

First, the heart of our faith is a reality the Church calls the *paschal mystery*—how Jesus, out of love, gave up his life for us all, and by rising brought life to the world. We speak this reality at every Mass when we proclaim the “Mystery of Faith.”

But this Mystery of Faith is not just about what Jesus did—it’s also about us and what we do “through him, with him, and in him.” Jesus invites us to be part of this paschal mystery by joining our lives to his dying and rising and living his life in our own.

We became part of this paschal mystery in our baptism, and it grows in us as we participate in Eucharist and in all the sacraments. And one of the startling truths of our faith is that, as we grow in the paschal mystery, we actually share more and more in the divine life of God, and we have

an opportunity to bring this divine life to the world in all the events of our ordinary, often mundane, daily lives.

Little by little, through all the experiences of our lives, good and bad, joyful, sorrowful, and in-between, we learn to “die” to our own self-centeredness and unhealthy, selfish desires and, instead, to practice compassion and forgiveness and generosity—to grow in love for others. Dying in Christ in this and many other ways, we live in hope of rising with him to new life. Dying and rising—this is what being a disciple is all about.

In this book, we’ll mention the paschal mystery from time to time. This is because, ideally, home is one of the most important places where we learn to be disciples and live this paschal mystery more deeply. It’s one of the places where we learn to make room for others, to find balance between our needs and the needs of others, to grow

in love in many ways, to have our unhealthy egos cut down a notch or two, and to find the courage and support and learn the wisdom we need to go beyond the home and reach out to others. It is also one of the places where flashes of the sacred, of resurrection and transfiguration, can pop up and dazzle us at any time. The home is a holy place of “dying and rising,” a school for disciples.

Second, remember that we all experience “home” in different ways throughout our lives. At the moment, you may be part of a family with children. You may be a couple. You may be living alone. No matter. As you read and pray with this book, think of all the ways you have experienced “home” during your life. Some of the memories may be happy. Some may be less so. But all these experiences, good and bad, are part of home for you, part of your life, part of your path of discipleship, and they are

worth praying over and blessing God for.

And remember too that some of us live in huge houses, some in small studio apartments. But while these differences often matter a great deal to us, Jesus tells us they matter not a bit to God. So please feel free to adapt what we offer here to your own situation.

With that said, let's begin where we usually do with a home—with the front door.



The
FRONT DOOR

Stop and take a long look at your front door, and your back and side doors if you have them. Look beyond any scratch marks or peeling paint or any smudges on the door glass.

Consider instead how solid the door is, what it sounds like when the wind and rain and sleet beat against it and how the door (and the house as a whole) shelters you. At bedtime do you double-check to make sure

the doors are locked? I do. These doors are our family's defense against the dangers of the night.

Now think of God, who does the same. "I come to you for shelter," the psalmist cries (25:20). "Protect me, keep me safe, and don't disappoint me!"

But our doors are more than barriers; they're entry and exit points, portals between our private, domestic world and the rest of life. We pass through them to go to work, to the store, to school. We kiss our spouses and children goodbye there. We practice hospitality at our doors, greeting friends and visitors and occasionally a person in need, and we practice patience and courtesy as we deal with a variety of salespersons and religious evangelizers. The front door can be the paschal mystery in action—no matter how much we might want to be alone, somebody knocks. The world calls us out of ourselves.

Let the door slam shut, and think of how we too are a door, a portal—for it is through us that Jesus enters into and interacts with our world. We can open wide to let him come through us to others, or we can slam shut inside ourselves and keep God's grace from breaking through. How widely do we welcome the world? What opportunity to grow in holiness is about to ring the doorbell?

PRAYER

*Lord Jesus, you said “Behold, I stand
at the door and knock.”*

*Help us to be aware of all the ways
you come to our door.*

*Help us to see you in our neighbors, friends,
and strangers who come knocking.*

*May our door open wide
to the needs of the world,
but slam tight against prejudice, violence,
and anything that hides you
from our sight.*

*Be our shelter in times of trouble,
and may all who pass through this door
know your saving love. Amen.*