Welcome to Epiphany, the Great Reveal.

"Epiphany" comes from a Greek word that means “appearing” or “revealing.” The Gospel for Epiphany tells of the Magi, wise men from far away who followed a star to find the newborn King of the Jews. Find Him they did, just as prophets promised. The Great Reveal of Immanuel, God-With-Us in the flesh, was truly underway.

Each church year, Epiphany points us to the rest of the story about the Messiah in the manger. Gospel readings for Epiphany and the remaining Sundays in January move us quickly, over the decades, from the visit of adoring Magi to our Lord’s Baptism and the beginning of His public ministry. The Little One adored by shepherds is recognized as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The newborn King, once announced by angel choirs, now issues His own compelling invitation: Drop everything! Follow Me.

To celebrate this Great Reveal over the years, some of my congregations have observed an old custom, the Epiphany house blessing. As pastor, I’d visit residences to chalk the following on entry door sills: 20 C+M+B 20. The letters CMB denotes this blessing: Christus mansionem benedicat (Christ bless this house), while the numbers represent the millennium and century. CMB also recalls traditional names given to the wise men (Casper, Melchior and Balthasar). Prayers are offered for the house and all who reside therein. Some households gather other family and friends, including the blessing as part of their end-of-Christmas festivities.

Whether it’s a single-family dwelling, an apartment, a room in a skilled nursing facility, or another place, these chalk-marked doors bear witness to the world that Christ is Lord of this home. The blessing also reminds us, coming and going, to put Christ and His Church first in all of our discipleship, including our stewardship of all God’s gifts — time, talent, treasure and testimony. So, may it be for us as we celebrate Epiphany, the Great Reveal, and look forward to the year ahead. Amen.