

A quick Google search assisted by AI informed me that the Twelve Days of Christmas (December 25 to January 5) are a festive season of feasting, merrymaking, and religious observance, traditionally marked by parties, wassailing, and eating King Cake with decorations left up until Epiphany Eve even until February 2 for Candle Mass. The Twelve Days traditionally have celebrations that extend well past Christmas Day. In my neighborhood, I quite often see the Christmas trees, which have been up since shortly after Halloween, already out on the curb by December 26th and not a Christmas song can be heard on the radio after midnight on December 25. It's more like the twelve minutes of Christmas. As I write this, I have been spending Advent in a watching, waiting mood led by the daily readings at Mass, and it seems like a lot of watching and waiting to be over with so quickly with celebrating done and gift wrappings in a black garbage bag in a matter of minutes on December 25.

I was once in Slovakia on Epiphany and a troupe of young folks from the village came house to house dressed as the three kings and acting out a play about the Holy Family. They were greeted with drinks and food at each house. I have heard about Twelfth Night parties with King cakes and fireworks. In Slovakia, New Year's Eve is commonly called "Celebrating Sylvester" since it is the feast day of Pope Sylvester who died on that date in 335AD. Hispanic families in my town host an Epiphany party with a King Cake and the person who gets the slice with the tiny baby hidden inside is said to have luck and the duty to host the next Epiphany party. I'm wondering if there is some way to bring back some of these spiritual traditions that have been a bit lost in our culture.

Our Liturgical calendar for January can help us a bit, reminding us that it is still Christmas season until January 11, ending with the feast of Baptism of the Lord. As Catholic women, it is often up to us to nurture the everyday spiritual lives of our families. There are a few books that can give us ideas about how to incorporate these often lost traditions back into our culture. I'd recommend a few books:

*Festive Faith, a Handbook for Homes and Parishes* by Setffani Aquila  
*Theology of the Home: Finding Eternal in the Everyday* by Carrie Gress  
*The Catholic Home, Celebrations and Traditions for Holidays and Feast Days and Every Day* by Meredith Gould.

It is traditional to start the year with an Epiphany blessing of homes, marking the doorway with blessed chalk. This year the inscription will be 20 + C + M + B +26 to represent the year and C M B to represent Caspar, Melchoir, and Balthazar, the Three Kings. You could recite the following Epiphany prayer for the blessing of your home:

Lord God of heaven and earth,  
you revealed your only-begotten Son to every nation  
by the guidance of a star.  
Bless this house and all who inhabit it.  
Fill them with the light of Christ,  
that their concern for others may reflect your love. Amen