

A Blessing on Our Homes

Introduction

Given that we are all required to stay home as much as we can and some face even stricter instructions it seems a good moment to renew our appreciation of the gifts that home represents and the joys it imparts.

These brief prayer services take different areas of home in turn, one each day so that this place enjoys the spotlight and becomes the focus of our pondering on what each place represents. After a short piece of scripture and opening prayer the reflection acts as a help but even more important will be the personal and family memories and insights that surface. After the reflection there is a verse from a hymn followed by the blessing prayer and an exclamation of praise to finish.

It would be a good thing if we could **make each place special for a day by placing a symbol there** to be moved day by day to its new location. This could be a candle (careful if there are children in the house), a family photo, a significant ornament or statue, a cross, a vase of flowers etc... This will help to bring your attention to that place each time you pass or enter.

There are also be suggestions to encourage children to join in.

Of course, every home is different and how we use each space can vary to some degree. So, it might be that some of these suggestions don't fit perfectly, in which case either adapt to suit or give it a pass. But just to help you prepare here are the places being suggested over the coming days:

1. Front Door or main entrance including hallway, porch or vestibule (if you have a vestibule please don't boast), **2. Living Room**, lounge or salon (same instruction as above applies), **3. Kitchen**, **4. Dining Area**, **5. Bedrooms**, **6. Bathroom**, **7. Play Area**, **8. Study** (ok so now I'm bragging) or office for home workers. **9. Garden**, (a patio, window box or houseplant will suffice).

those invited to share the hospitality of our home, the visitors whose presence is required by illness, frailty, or other need bringing us comfort, relief and companionship. Recall the days that leaving has been full of anticipation, a holiday, a wedding, a party, etc... How about our feelings when we set out for church, do we give any thought to the fact that those who choose to take part in the Mass do so not only for themselves but as representatives of the neighbourhood. For now of course, these prayers are ours to pray at home, but let's look forward to when we have an opportunity to meet once again for the gift of Eucharist.

Either now or perhaps better still later in the day or the evening, you might like to look at the pictures in the light of today's prayer focus and allow them to help you ponder a little more deeply on the thoughts arising from today's focus. There are some short notes at the end of this article to give a little background.

*Let us build a house where love can dwell
And all can safely live,
A place where saints and children tell
How hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
Rock of faith and vault of grace;
Here the love of Christ shall end divisions.
All are welcome, all are welcome,
All are welcome, in this place.*
(Marty Haugen © GIA Publications)

May the door of this home
And the door of my/our heart(s)
Always be open to welcome
Both friend and stranger. Amen

Praise to the one who dwells with us! Amen

Crafty Kids – Think of the different members of your family and the ways they help you feel at home in your house or apartment. Remember special times when you come through the door and someone says hello, or gives you a hug saying “*Welcome Home, I hope you had a nice day at school*” or “*Did you enjoy playing with your friends?*”, or “*Would you like a drink and a biscuit?*” Or perhaps they help you feel better when you come home sad, upset or angry. Christians believe that we all bring Jesus with us wherever we go, we help each other feel safe, or understood and cared for we are being kind to Jesus who told us “***If you do one little thing for one of my children you do it for me***”. Feeling welcome and safe is one of the best things about a happy home, its something we can all help come true.

Something we do when Christmas is coming is put out a sign asking: “Santa to Stop Here!”, how about drawing a picture or making a model of your house with a big “WELCOME JESUS” mat in front of the door.

Notes on the artworks

Contemporary artist and craftsman Nicholas Mynheer created this new doorway for the C13th **aumbry** in Iffley Church Oxford in 2011. An aumbry is more known by Catholics as the tabernacle, itself a word recalling the tents in which the ark of the Covenant was sheltered as the People of Israel journeyed through the desert. In a style reminiscent of the Arts and Crafts movement the aumbry has a simple dignity using wooden doors quietly guarded by two 21st-century angels. Light shines from within, indicating that the bread and wine of the Eucharist lie ready for service. This work reflects Nicholas Mynheer's mystical approach to art and theology executed with characteristic simplicity.

One of the most recognisable religious images of the Victorian era, *The Light of the World*, by William Holman Hunt is to be found at Keeble College in Oxford. In the Book of Revelation we read “Behold, I stand at the door and knock” and this painting imagines the door as the soul of a Christian that has been so firmly shut for a long time that brambles have grown up around it. But still he waits, gently tapping with lantern at the ready.

The **entrance of Saint John Henry Newman Church**, Warrington (David Horne, Hume Upright Architects 2010) is consistent with the intention of offering a place bathed in light. The doors can be opened wide to encourage visitors to know they are welcome. Some people find it difficult to cross the threshold of a church so these doors are trying to help people make that last step. But we also include those who are reluctant for we recognise the sincerity of their hesitation. For as the psalmist says: I prefer the threshold of the house of God to the dwellings of the ungodly (Psalm 84: 10)

The **Tabernacle Doors Saint John Henry Newman Church**, Warrington (Angela Godfrey 2010) are a metal cast presenting texts from the sixth chapter of John’s Gospel: *For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.* (NRSV)

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