

## House Blessings

By Vicar Garrison

God's people have always believed that blessings are more than just well wishes. When Jacob tricked Isaac into receiving the Messianic blessing, Esau didn't try to argue that they were just words that didn't mean anything. Instead, something had actually been given to Jacob, even if it couldn't be seen, through the mouth of Isaac—and there weren't any take backs. The reason there weren't any take backs is that Isaac's blessing was God's blessing. And praise be to God that He doesn't do take backs. Even when we reject His blessings they remain. Jesus died to bless all nations, regardless if they want it or not. As Christians, we live in this blessing. A blessing is a word, but we know that God's Word is living and active and does what it says. Therefore, it is natural for Christians to desire the blessings/words of God placed upon themselves and upon things they care about, just as Jacob desired. Luckily, we don't have to trick blind old men to get blessings, instead we can just ask those whom God has appointed to give His blessings: pastors.

Pastors are essentially just people who give God's blessing to the world. They announce forgiveness, and they don't just announce it as a nice thing that you can hear, but when they announce it Jesus says "If you forgive anyone their sins, they are forgiven them" (John 20:21). When the pastor speaks as ordained by God, you might as well imagine it is Jesus speaking the word. Before God's throne you are, in reality, not counted as a sinner. Pastors bless you, but they can bless other things as well. Pastors bless things in the church like the altar, the hymnals, the pews, and the organ that they might be used to enrich and protect the lives of God's people as they worship. They can also bless things outside the church, like your home.

Jesus says in Matthew 12:43-45 that evil spirits (demons) roam around looking for empty places to inhabit. Jesus is talking about guarding our hearts, but if we understand what Jesus is saying, we shouldn't be ignorant of demons moving around in the world. Christ protects us from demonic possession, but that doesn't mean that they aren't around and ready to torment us. Demons like to live in places where evil has been done previously. So, if you've moved into a new home or apartment, it is right to want God's blessing of light and protection over it, to cleanse it. This is true for new houses as well. Your house may look nice and clean and God be praised for that, but it would be a mistake to think that just because something looks nice and new that Satan wouldn't still be around. Let your home be blessed by the Lord and ward off evil. You bless your body as the temple of the Holy Spirit. Bless your home as a temple in which your family worships by their Christian living. Further, you may want your home to be blessed after something horrific has happened in or near it. If some evil has been done, God's word helps ward off the evil. Most crucially, if you suspect or have witnessed demonic activity in your home, let God's worker, the pastor, come and cast it out just as Jesus did throughout His earthly ministry.

Maybe you're thinking, I'm blessed at the Divine Service every Sunday, why would my home need to be blessed? And fair enough, you are blessed and protected from all evil. In fact, when you are blessed in baptism you could say that you don't need any more blessings. But that is a spiritually immature thing to say. You still sin and live in darkness and need to hear and receive the same blessings from God over and over again. So, why wouldn't you want God's blessings to

be deliberately spoken by the pastor upon the place where you sleep and spend some of the most important moments of your life? The Lord wishes to be near you. This is a way by faith to welcome Him near you outside of the Divine Service.

If you would like the pastors to come and bless your home, the season of Epiphany is the perfect time for it. The Church throughout history has practiced house blessings during the season of Epiphany. Just as the Magi visit the home of Jesus during Epiphany, so the pastor can visit your home. The pastor will come, maybe with his vestments, and do a short service where he reads some Psalms and other Scriptures, you all sing hymns, pray over the house, and receive a formal blessing for the house. He can also go room to room and bless the home, or bless a specific part of the home. Historically, it's customary to invite others over to your home for this occasion and have good Christian fellowship afterward. Christians gathering as the kingdom of God on earth stifles satan's power while the Lord's face shines brightly. Your King Jesus has defeated all darkness, and by blessings He continues to bring His kingdom of light to you today.