

# The Blessing of Homes and Businesses

In the Orthodox Church, we have a rich tradition of blessing material things, especially those things that we believe can bring us closer to God. Because everything has been made by God, and because God made the world good, and because, as human beings, we often depend on certain material things for our lives - like homes and businesses - the Church has developed some prayers and services that remind of this need to bless them and ask God to protect them.

So, in the blessing of homes, the priest is called at a time when the entire family can gather around the kitchen or dining room and offer prayers together. In this service, we hear about Christ's visit to the home of Zacchaeus, a tax collector that no one respected. After entering his home and having heard that Zacchaeus was, in fact, a righteous man, Christ responded, "Today salvation has come to this home." Likewise, in the blessing of new businesses, we hear Christ's parable of the talents and how all of us are called to be productive and use the talents that God has given us, to grow them and use them for good.

So, in preparation for the priest's visit either to a home or a business, the family should prepare a bowl of water, usually a glass or crystal bowl with about a quart of water. A little sprig of some bush or tree is also needed (basil is always nice to use) in order to sprinkle the water around the area. Optional items that may be included are: an icon of Christ or the Theotokos, and some incense (charcoal included).

The priest will begin with some prayers and involve some of the people by reading the epistle from St. Paul and responding with "Lord have mercy" to the petitions. At a certain point, the sprinkling of the water takes place. Usually, the priest will go throughout the house, into the garage, downstairs and into every room. The family usually follows or guides him around. The service then concludes from where it began. After it is over, the remaining water is used by the owner to bless the foundation and the outside of the building. The water should never be placed down the drain.