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The Three Kings in Lithuania



Lithuania may have received her devotion to the Three Kings from Germany. On the eve of the feast of the Three Kings (Its liturgical name is the Epiphany, but this word is foreign to Lithuanians) men dressed up in flowing robes decorated with stars, bearded, and wearing crowns on their heads, they would ride around the towns and villages on horseback.

The main job of these “kings” was to mark the doors of the houses with blessed chalk: †G†M†B. This was supposed to bring blessings on the house and keep it safe from evil spirits.

Various other folk customs and superstitions sprang up around the feast of the Three Kings. One was to take the blessed chalk used by the “kings” and draw a circle around yourself as far out as your arm could reach. Then you had to call on the devil asking for money, “Give me 9,000, 900, 90, 9!” If the devil hands it to you, don’t take it but make him throw it into the circle. Then, ask him, “Do I owe you anything?” If he says, “No,” you can take the money.

In present-day Lithuania, some of the old customs are being revived — mostly marking doors with the Three Kings’ names on the eve of the feast. In other places, “kings” dress up in celebration.

— **Sr. Ona Mikailaitė**

On the cover:
Two Sisters from the Convent of the Immaculate Conception in Lithuania accompany children dressed as the Three Kings on their rounds.
Photo: Sr. Ona Mikailaitė