

SUNDAY to SUNDAY

SAINT OF THE WEEK

AGATHA

third century

Memorial—February 5



As with other early Christian martyrs, the details of Agatha's story are based on Christian tradition and legend. The Sicilian-born virgin was martyred during the persecution of Emperor Decius, who ruled from 249-51. She was sent to a brothel in an attempt to force her to repudiate her vow of chastity, but she remained steadfast.

Amid this ordeal, her

breasts were cut off. Healed when St. Peter appeared to her in prison, she died a few days later from further torture. Popular devotion to Agatha soon spread, and she was added to the Roman Canon of the Mass in about 600.

Through the intercession of Saint Blaise, bishop and martyr,

may God deliver you from every disease of the throat and from every other illness:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

(*Book of Blessings*, no. 1634)

In traditional iconography, St. Blaise is often depicted with iron combs and crossed candles. He's the patron saint of wool traders, wildlife, and the city of Dubrovnik in Croatia.



FACT OF FAITH

ST. BLAISE AND THE BLESSING OF THROATS

by Fr. Larry Rice

Many Catholic saints have unique customs associated with their feast days. One of the more unusual is the tradition of blessing throats on the feast day of St. Blaise, bishop and martyr.

What we know of St. Blaise is from Christian tradition and legend. He was a physician and became the bishop of Sebastea in historical Armenia (modern-day Turkey). According to one account, in the year 316, the governor of Cappadocia and Lesser Armenia was commanded by the Emperor Licinius to round up all the Christians and put them to death. As bishop, Blaise was being led away to prison, a woman brought to him her son, who was choking on a fish bone. The bishop prayed, and the boy was miraculously healed. Later, refusing to renounce his faith, Blaise was beaten with iron combs and beheaded.

Today, nearly 1700 years later, the faith of St. Blaise is remembered on February 3, when we have our throats blessed. Two candles are crossed over the throat (unlit candles, for obvious reasons!), and the priest prays,

PRAYER

ACTS OF THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

ACT OF FAITH

O my God, I firmly believe that you are one God in three divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I believe that your divine Son became man and died for our sins and that he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches because you have revealed them who are eternal truth and wisdom, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. In this faith I intend to live and die. Amen.

ACT OF HOPE

O Lord God, I hope by your grace for the pardon of all my sins and after life here to gain eternal happiness because you have promised it who are infinitely powerful, faithful, kind, and merciful. In this hope I intend to live and die. Amen.

ACT OF LOVE

O Lord God, I love you above all things and I love my neighbor for your sake because you are the highest, infinite and perfect good, worthy of all my love. In this love I intend to live and die. Amen.