

Saint Blaise: feast day February 3

Not much is known about St Blaise except that he is the patron saint of sore throats and wild animals. More is known about devotion to him rather than his life itself. On his feast day, the anointing of the sick takes place. Traditionally two candles are blessed, crossed over and pressed against either side of one's throat as a blessing is said.



St Blaise was a physician who eventually was ordained a bishop in the 4th Century and he worked hard to encourage the spiritual and physical health of his followers. His protection of those with throat ailments comes from a story of a woman whose son had a fish bone lodged in his throat. The woman brought her son to St Blaise who instantly healed him just as the boy was on the point of death.

Message

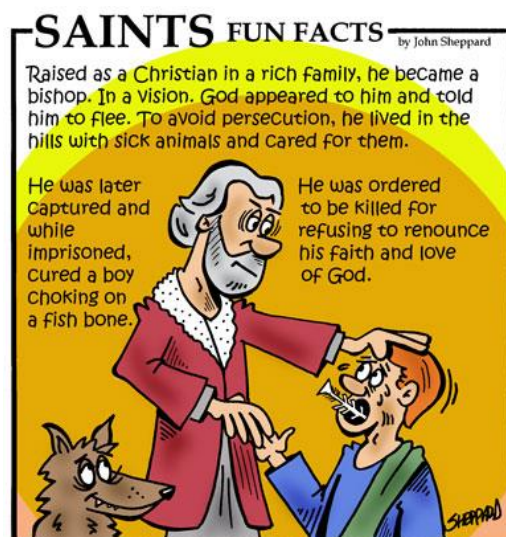
After being made a bishop, a new persecution of Christians began and Blaise received a message from God to go into the hills and hide to escape persecution. He hid in the caves and during his time there, he developed a connection to wild animals. Many of them were sick whom he cured as he did with the boy. One day, a group of men hunting in the mountains discovered the cave St Blaise was hiding in. He was instantly recognised as a bishop and taken hostage.

The men took him back for a trial and, on the way, they passed a wolf who had stolen a pig which belonged to a poor woman. Having built a connection with wild animals, Blaise was able to talk the wolf into releasing the pig. This bought him some time when he was starved by his captor for the woman grateful for Blaise's help sneaked food into the prison.

His example

He refused to denounce his faith and upheld it, even when he was cruelly beaten. Eventually, Blaise was sentenced to death by the governor.

This feast day, you can show your devotion to St Blaise by getting your throat blessed and also by following his example of caring for wild animals. If you leave behind crusts from your toast or lunch, save them, break them down and sprinkle them outside for the birds to peck on.



St. Blaise



Easy to make - Pirouette cookies tied together with a red liquorice strand and topped with a diagonally cut marshmallow with the cut side dipped in orange coloured sugar and stuck on with melted white chocolate. These take about 5 minutes to put together and the kids love them!!

Prayer to Saint Blaise

May, Almighty God, through the prayers of St. Blaise, Bishop and Martyr, bless us and protect us from sickness of the throat. Amen

St Blaise

A woman brought her son who was choking on a fishbone to Blaise and the child was healed

Sick cattle are given the blessing of St Blaise and water

In France, there is the blessing of corn seeds. Women carry buckets of seed to be blessed at church. Half of the seeds are left as an offering and the other half are mixed in with the regular seed before it is set

He is also considered to be the protector of cities, protector against wild animals, patron of vegetarians, and patron of the woollen industry

While he was on his way to prison, a woman came to him to say tell him that a wolf had taken her pig. Through the work of Blaise, the wolf returned the pig to the woman

In Germany, St Blaise is the Patron St of wind instruments, bands and players

Near Valencia, Spain, St Blaise became the Patron St of a town where it was thought that prayers to St Blaise ended a diphtheria epidemic

In 971, when present-day Dubrovnik was under threat of attack, story has it that Blaise appeared to the people of the city and saved them

Bonfires are lit during the feast of St Blaise (probably because of Blaise is pronounced *blaze*)

During persecution he hid in a cave and while he was there, blessed sick and wounded animals

Every year in Norwich, England, great celebrations are had in the woollen industry community on the feast of St Blaise

In England, St Blaise is mostly associated with wool. A village in Cornwall is called St Blazey. It is thought that in a town near here, St Blaise taught woollen skills

In Italy, small cakes are baked on the 1st of February, blessed and shared on the 3rd in areas where there are woollen factories. Also in Serra San Bruno, men give cookies called *abbacolo* (walking sticks, like the Bishop's Crozier) to their girlfriends. If the girl breaks the cookie in two and gives half back to the man, then they will get married.

In Spain the feast of St Blaise occurs during a spring festival. Sweet breads called *panellets* are offered to St Blaise and shared with family, friends and pets

In Aubin, a little town in France, St Blaise became the Patron St of the parish church because it was thought that he put a stop to an epidemic that was wiping out cattle

A cathedral in Dubrovnik has the following relics of St Blaise on display: the head of St Blaise, his left and right hand, his throat and his right foot

FOR YOU TO DO

St Blaise is one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers. Who were they and who were the other thirteen?