

Saint Blaise

SAINT OF THE DAY

03_02_2020



The Saint famous for the protection of the throat was bishop of Sebaste, in ancient Armenia Minor (now in central Turkey), where he suffered martyrdom in 316 under Licinius, the then Emperor of the East. Some time after having promulgated (together with Constantine) the edict of Milan that granted freedom of worship, Licinius resumed persecutions against Christians – these are extensively described in the 10th book of the *Ecclesiastical History* by Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 265-340). In fact, Licinius plotted against Constantine himself, who was then Emperor of the West and his brother-in-law:

Constantine would later defeat Licinius in a series of battles between 316 and 324.

According to an Armenian synaxarium when the persecutions were resumed, Blaise took refuge on a mountain, where he tamed wild animals and healed the sick who would come to him, attracted by his reputation for piety and the holiness of his life. Blaise was also a doctor but performed many healings "not by prescribing medicines, but by the name of Christ". He was eventually arrested by the men of Agricola, a governor charged by Licinius with persecuting Christians. At this point, Blaise performed his most famous miracle, saving by faith alone, a child who was about to die because of a fishbone stuck in his throat. In prison, Blaise was beaten and his flesh was torn with the iron combs used for carding wool; finally, he was beheaded.

Blaise is included in the group of the so-called 14 Holy Helpers, invoked for looking after particular needs. A collective feast had been instituted for them in the 15th century but then it was suppressed in 1969 with the reform of the calendar. On the day of Saint Blaise's liturgical memory, it is customary to perform the blessing of the throat with two crossed candles blessed the day before during the feast of the Presentation of the Lord (or, failing that, the same day). The priest blesses the faithful with these words: "By the intercession of Saint Blaise, bishop and martyr, the Lord frees you from a sore throat and all other evils. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen".

Patron of: farmers, carders, laryngologists, mattress makers, shepherds; invoked against throat diseases