

## Why We Do What We Do

This weekend we are blessing throats at all the masses. "Saint Blase was a bishop of the early church, exercising his ministry in Sebaste in Armenia. He was martyred during the persecutions of the Roman emperor Licinius in about 316AD.

"Tradition says that he was a student of philosophy and perhaps even a physician prior to becoming a bishop. According to legend, when the persecutions began in his city, Blase took refuge in the woods, making a home in a cave. There he lived as a hermit in solitude and prayer. One day hunters seeking wild animals for the amphitheatre games found him. They were in shock, for here was Blase, kneeling in prayer, surrounded by lions, bears, and wolves.

"The hunters dragged him away to prison. While incarcerated, a distraught mother came to visit the bishop. Her son had a fish bone caught in his throat and was choking to death. Blase offered prayers for the boy and her son immediately coughed up the bone. The boy's mother then brought Blase food and candles to the prison. This is the probably the most famous story of Saint Blase and. . . of course it is also the basis for the blessing of throats which we do on February 3, Blase's feast day. . . . The cult of Saint Blase can be found as early as the eighth century." (From *"The Flame"* February 2, 2008, St. Blase Parish, Sterling Heights, Mich.)