

“O God, source and origin of all light, who on this day showed to the just man Simeon the Light for revelation to the Gentiles, we humbly ask that, in answer to your people’s prayers, you may be pleased to sanctify with your blessing these candles, which we are eager to carry in praise of your name, so that, treading the path of virtue, we may reach the light which never fails.”

The above prayer is used for the blessing of candles on February 2nd, the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, traditionally referred to as Candlemas. As sources of light, candles have long symbolized the Light of the world, Jesus Christ. The blessing and procession of lighted candles into the church on the feast of the Presentation symbolizes the Christ child’s coming into the temple and the singing of his praises by Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:22-40).

We use candles blessed at Candlemas the following day, February 3rd, for the blessing of throats on the feast of St. Blaise. St. Blaise was a fourth century bishop and martyr noted for many miracles, two of which led eventually to the ritual of blessing throats with candles on his feast day. St. Blaise was arrested for his Christian faith, and, as he was being taken to prison, he miraculously stopped a wolf from killing a woman’s pig. In gratitude, the woman later brought candles to St. Blaise’s cell so that he could read the Scriptures, thus forever associating candles with St. Blaise. The second, more familiar, miracle took place when St. Blaise, who had been a physician prior to becoming a bishop, miraculously saved a young boy from choking to death on a fish bone, hence the blessing of throats on his feast.

We will bless throats on the feast of St. Blaise, Friday, February 3rd, following the 8:00 Mass. For those who are unable to attend that Mass, we will also bless throats following all Masses the weekend of February 4th-5th. While the blessing of throats is not magic, it is a sacramental in the church, reminding us of God’s tender care for us and of the great faith of St. Blaise. May our celebration of Candlemas and the blessing of throats deepen our faith in Jesus Christ, the Light of the world.