

Rev. Fr. Leonard Goffine's
The Church's Year

INSTRUCTION ON THE FEAST OF ST. BLASE,
BISHOP AND MARTYR

February 3



St. Blase was born at Sebaste, in Armenia. In his youth he gave himself with great zeal to the study of philosophy and medicine, but at the same time did not forget his soul. He followed Christ in beautiful virtues, especially in meekness and humility, and kept from the sinful ways of the world. He was appointed bishop of Sebaste at the earnest solicitations of its inhabitants. At that time the Christians, especially the bishops and priests, suffered many persecutions from the pagans; persecutions from which Sebaste did not escape. That his life might be saved for his flock, St.

Blase withdrew to a grotto in Mount Agaesus, where he led a most penitent life, and entirely destroyed the old man in himself. If one masters his corrupt nature, subdues his evil inclinations, and banishes everything earthly from himself, then his course of life becomes a heavenly one, and he becomes master over the earthly, material life, so that all nature is his friend and servant. So it was with St. Blase. The animals of the forests became his friends and served him; they approached him with confidence, permitted themselves to be caressed by him, had their wounds healed by him, received his blessing, brought him food, and obeyed his voice. A hunter one day met him in the midst of these animals, and forthwith reported the saintly man to the governor, who sent his officers to apprehend him. St. Blase went cordially to meet them, and when they reached the door of his cave, he said: "You are welcome, for now I see that God has not forgotten me." When they were returning with him, the animals followed, and the officers terrified would have fled, but St.

Blase reassured them: "Be not afraid," he said, "they will do you no harm," and ordered the animals to go back. They obeyed, but for a long time looked sadly after him. While on his way many people came on the road to see the saint and to ask his blessing; among them a woman whose child was suffering from the effects of having swallowed a fish-bone. She was inconsolable,

and cried out to the saint: "O dearest master, help my child, or it will be strangled!" The saint knelt down, prayed, blessed the child with the sign of the cross, and it was immediately cured.

When the saint had reached the city, he was taken before the governor who ordered him to worship the gods. Refusing to do this, he was struck with clubs; while thus tortured, he said to the governor: "Do you indeed fancy, that by torture you can force me to forsake my Lord and my God? You are indeed wrong, no pain shall separate me from my Jesus." The governor, then, was so enraged that he had him bound to a pillar and torn to pieces by iron claws. St. Blase calmly looking up to heaven, suffered all without uttering a single moan. He was then taken to prison, where the governor allowed him to remain for a time. Once more called to the judgment - seat, the saint again firmly refused to offer sacrifice to idols, and the governor then ordered that he should be beheaded.

The Church venerates his memory on the third of February. After the Mass on this day, the priest, holding two burning candles, touches with them the necks of the faithful while he pronounces the following blessing: "Through the intercession of the holy bishop and martyr Blase, may the Lord preserve thee from every disease of the throat, and all other evils, in the name †of the Father, † and of the Son, † and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." It is a very ancient custom to invoke St. Blase in all diseases of the throat, hence this blessing.

COLLECT O God, who dost gladden us with the yearly solemnity of blessed Blase, Thy martyr and bishop: mercifully grant, that as we celebrate his birthday to immortality, so we may also rejoice in his protection. Thro'. etc.