

February 3, 2023

Good Morning!

Mass at 8:30 including the Blessing of Throats in honor of St. Blaise. First Friday Adoration follows Mass until 3:00 pm.

Fish Fry and a Movie returns thanks to the Knights of Columbus!
Everything starts at 5:30 p.m.

1. Today's Readings: [Friday of the Fourth Week in Ordinary Time | USCCB](#)

2. The RE Corner with Jan Heithaus: Today we celebrate 2 saints, both with optional memorials. One, St. Blaise is more well-known for the throat blessing we often receive on this day. The other, St. Ansgar, is not so well-known. He was a missionary, monk, abbot, and bishop. We share biographies of both saints.

3. Quotes of the Day:

~"If I were worthy of such a favour from my God, I would ask that He grant me this one miracle – that by His grace, He would make of me a good man." *St. Ansgar*

~"Father of Mercy and God of all consolation, graciously look upon me and impart to me the blessing which flows from this holy sacrament, Overshadow me with your loving kindness, and let this divine mystery bear fruit in me." *St. Blaise*

St. Ansgar & St. Blaise, Pray for Us!
St. Joseph, Pray for Us!

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St. Ansgar

Ansgar was the son of a noble Frankish family, born near Amiens (present day France). After his mother's early death, Ansgar was brought up in Benedictine monastery of Corbie in Picardy. According to the *Vita Ansgarii* ("Life of Ansgar"), when the little boy learned in a vision that his mother was in the company of Mary, mother of Jesus, his careless attitude toward spiritual matters changed to seriousness. His pupil, successor, and eventual biographer Rimbert considered the visions (of which this was the first) to have been Ansgar's main life motivator.

Ansgar acted in the context of the phase of Christianization of Saxony (present day Northern Germany) begun by Charlemagne and continued by Charlemagne's son and successor, Louis the Pious. In 822 Ansgar became one of many missionaries sent to found the abbey of Corvey (New Corbie) in Westphalia, where he became a teacher and preacher. A group of monks including Ansgar were sent further north to Jutland with the king Harald Klak, who had received baptism during his exile. With Harald's downfall in 827 and Ansgar's companion Autbert having died, their school for the sons of courtiers closed and Ansgar returned to Germany. Then in 829, after the Swedish king Björn at Hauge requested missionaries for his Swedes, King Louis sent Ansgar, now accompanied by friar Witmar from New Corbie as his assistant. Ansgar preached and made converts, particularly during six months at Birka, on Lake Mälaren, where the wealthy widow Mor Frideborg extended hospitality. Ansgar organized a small congregation with her and the king's steward, Hergeir, as its most prominent members.

In 831 Ansgar returned to Louis' court at Worms and was appointed to the Archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen. This was a new archbishopric, incorporating the bishoprics of Bremen and Verden and with the right to send missions into all the northern lands, as well as to consecrate bishops for them. Ansgar received the mission of evangelizing pagan Denmark, Norway and Sweden. The King of Sweden decided to cast lots as to whether to admit the Christian missionaries into his kingdom. Ansgar recommended the issue to the care of God, and the lot was favorable. Ansgar was consecrated as a bishop in November 831, with the approval of Gregory IV. Before traveling north once again, Ansgar traveled to Rome to receive the pallium directly from the pope's hands and was formally

named legate for the northern lands. Ebbo, Archbishop of Reims had previously received a similar commission, but would be deposed twice before his death in 851, and never actually traveled so far north, so the jurisdiction was divided by agreement, with Ebbo retaining Sweden for himself. For a time Ansgar devoted himself to the needs of his own diocese, which was still a missionary territory and had few churches. He founded a monastery and a school in Hamburg. Although intended to serve the Danish mission further north, it accomplished little.

After Louis the Pious died in 840, his empire was divided and Ansgar lost the abbey of Turholt, which Louis had given to endow Ansgar's work. Then in 845, the Danes unexpectedly raided Hamburg, destroying all the church's treasures and books. Ansgar now had neither see nor revenue, and many helpers deserted him. The new king, Louis' third son, Louis the German, did not re-endow Turholt to Ansgar, but in 847 he named the missionary to the vacant diocese of Bremen, where Ansgar moved in 848. However, since Bremen had been suffragan to the Bishop of Cologne, combining the sees of Bremen and Hamburg presented canonical difficulties. After prolonged negotiations, Pope Nicholas I would approve the union of the two dioceses in 864.

Through this political turmoil, Ansgar continued his northern mission. The Danish civil war compelled him to establish good relations with two kings, Horik the Elder and his son, Horik II. Both assisted him until his death; Ansgar was able to secure permission to build a church in Sleswick north of Hamburg and recognition of Christianity as a tolerated religion. Ansgar did not forget the Swedish mission and spent two years there in person (848–850), averting a threatened pagan reaction. In 854, Ansgar returned to Sweden when king Olof ruled in Birka. According to Rimbert, he was well disposed to Christianity. On a Viking raid to Apuole (current village in Lithuania) in Courland, the Swedes plundered the Curonians.

Ansgar was buried in Bremen in 865. His successor as archbishop, Rimbert, wrote the *Vita Ansgarii*. He noted that Ansgar wore a rough hair shirt, lived on bread and water, and showed great charity to the poor. Adam of Bremen attributed the *Vita et miracula of Willehad* (first bishop of Bremen) to Ansgar in *Gesta Hammenburgensis ecclesiae*; Ansgar is also the reputed author of a collection of brief prayers *Pigmenta* (ed. J. M. Lappenberg, Hamburg, 1844). Pope Nicholas

I declared Ansgar a saint shortly after the missionary's death. The first actual missionary in Sweden and the Nordic countries (and organizer of the Catholic church therein), Ansgar was later declared "Patron of Scandinavia".

Relics are located in Hamburg in two places: St. Mary's Cathedral (Ger.: Domkirche St. Marien) and St. Ansgar's and St. Bernard's Church (Ger.: St. Ansgar und St. Bernhard Kirche). Statues of Bishop Ansgar stand in Hamburg, Copenhagen and Ribe, as well as a stone cross at Birka. His feast day (Lesser Festival) is 3 February, as it is in the Church of England and the Episcopal Church.

Visions



Saint Ansgar statue in Hamburg

Although a historical document and primary source written by a man whose existence can be proven historically, the *Vita Ansgarii* ("The Life of Ansgar") aims above all to demonstrate Ansgar's sanctity. It is partly concerned with Ansgar's visions, which, according to the author Rimbert, encouraged and assisted Ansgar's remarkable missionary feats.

Through the course of this work, Ansgar repeatedly embarks on a new stage in his career following a vision. According to Rimbert, his early studies and ensuing devotion to the ascetic life of a monk were inspired by a vision of his mother in the presence of Mary, mother of Jesus. Again, when the Swedish people were left without a priest for some time, he begged King Horik to help him with this problem; then after receiving his consent, consulted with Bishop Gautbert to find a suitable man. The two together sought the approval of King Louis, which he granted when he learned that they were in agreement on the issue. Ansgar was convinced he was commanded by heaven to undertake this mission and was influenced by a vision he received when he was concerned about the journey, in which he met a man who reassured him of his purpose and informed him of a prophet that he would meet, the abbot Adalhard, who would instruct him in what

was to happen. In the vision, he searched for and found Adalhard, who commanded, "Islands, listen to me, pay attention, remotest peoples", which Ansgar interpreted as God's will that he go to the Scandinavian countries as "most of that country consisted of islands, and also, when 'I will make you the light of the nations so that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth' was added, since the end of the world in the north was in Swedish territory".

Source: catholic.org



St. Blaise

Patron Saint of illnesses of the throat and other illnesses, wool workers, animals, bricklayers, bakers, farm workers

Through the intercession of Saint Blaise, bishop and martyr, may God deliver you from every disease of the throat and from every other illness. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. ~Blessing of throats

From 1346 to 1353, a bubonic plague commonly referred to as “Black Death” ravaged Europe, Asia, and North Africa. It was the most deadly pandemic in human history, with conservative estimates of its

deadly toll reaching higher than 25 million people. Almost half of the people in Europe died in this pandemic. During that plague, many Catholics prayed fervently. Out of that chaos, a new devotion to the “Fourteen Holy Helpers” emerged. Those holy helpers were fourteen saints who were believed to be powerful intercessors, especially to cure illness. Among those fourteen is today’s saint.

Very little is known about Saint Blaise. The earliest mention of his life was not written until about 200 years after his death, by the medical writer Aëtius Amidenus, who spoke of the intercessory power of Saint Blaise to help unlodge objects stuck in the throat. The slightly more detailed Acts of Saint Blaise was written about 400 years after his death. Whether or not the stories written of him are true, what is certain is that the faithful have devoutly sought his intercession for centuries, and that practice continues today in the form of the blessing of throats on his feast day.

Legend has it that Blaise was an excellent physician in his hometown of Sebaste, Armenia, modern-day Silvas, Turkey. As a youth, he studied many of the great philosophers. When the Bishop of Sebaste died, Blaise was chosen as the new bishop by the popular acclaim “of all the people.” He was said to be a man of great

faith and virtue, caring for his people in both body and soul. Many came to him for physical healing as a physician but also received many miracles. Many others came to him for spiritual healing, which was imparted by his deep faith. According to that same legend, even animals would listen to him and obey his commands, and he would heal them of ailments.

In the year 313, the co-ruling Roman Emperors, Constantine I and Licinius, jointly issued the Edict of Milan which established religious toleration throughout the Roman Empire. However, the Acts of Saint Blaise states that in 316, the Governor of Cappadocia, acting on an order by Licinius, began to arrest and kill Christians. Bishop Blaise is reported to have been among those arrested.

While on Blaise's way to jail, the legend continues that a boy was choking on a fishbone, and the boy's mother sent her son to Blaise for his prayers. Bishop Blaise miraculously cured him on the spot. Another story relates that on that journey to jail, a woman begged him to save her pig who had been seized by a wolf. Bishop Blaise ordered the wolf to release the pig and the wolf obeyed. Out of gratitude, the woman brought Blaise two wax candles to give light to his prison cell.

Despite these miracles, the governor insisted that Bishop Blaise renounce his Christian faith, which Blaise refused to do. Therefore, at the governor's order, Blaise was ripped apart by metal combs used to comb wool and then beheaded.

Today, Saint Blaise is the patron saint of wool combers because of the legend of his torture and death by the metal combs. He is patron saint of animals because of his alleged authority over them. He is the patron saint of diseases of the throat and other illnesses because of the story that he healed the boy with a fishbone stuck in his throat, was a physician, and miraculously healed many others of their ailments. Two wax candles are used to bless throats today because of the legend of the candles brought to him in jail by the grateful woman.

As we reflect upon these stories that have been passed down through the years, perhaps the most important story to reflect upon is the story of faith that so many people have had for many centuries in the intercession of Saint Blaise. From the people who might have sought his prayers at the time of his ministry, to those who sought his intercession during the Black Death centuries ago, to the priestly blessings today at Mass using candles to bless throats, God has used Saint Blaise in ways that he could have never foretold. This should reassure us that God wants us

to turn to the intercession of the saints in our time of need. Though God is fully capable of directly answering our prayers, He often chooses to use the mediation of others to impart His grace. Reflect upon your own devotion to Saint Blaise and all the saints. Seek out your special patron. Entrust your prayers to him or her and know that when you do, your patron offers you and your needs to God.

Saint Blaise, you accepted the will of God as it was expressed through the acclamation of the people to become their shepherd. You lovingly spread the faith, healed the sick, and laid down your life as a martyr. Please pray for me and my family that we may be kept safe from all illness, especially illnesses of the throat, and pray that I will have the same courage you had to be a witness to Christ, even to the point of death. Saint Blaise, pray for me. Jesus, I trust in You.

Source: mycatholic.life