

Catholic Trivia

Candlemas. Celebrated annually on February 2nd, 40 days after the birth of Our Lord, Candlemas is also known as the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord and the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary. According to the Gospel of Luke, Mary and Joseph presented the infant Jesus at the Temple in Jerusalem for purification, as was the custom for Jewish law. In presenting Jesus at the Temple, Mary and Joseph participated in a ritual that symbolized redemption and the consecration of the firstborn.

Blessing of Candles. At the heart of Candlemas is the symbolism of light. The blessing of candles serves as a powerful metaphor for Christ as the "Light of the World." The ceremony typically involves a procession of candles. This act of blessing symbolizes purification, renewal, and the triumph of light over darkness.

Candlemas marks the transition from the Christmas season to the period of preparation and reflection that culminates in the observance of Lent. Today, many Catholics celebrate Candlemas with reverence and joy. The ceremony of the blessing of candles continues to be a cherished tradition, with congregants taking part in the procession, receiving blessed candles, and bringing the light of Christ into their homes.

The blessed candles hold a special place in households for the rest of the year, often used during times of prayer, moments of reflection, or in times of need. In some countries the candle blessed on Feb 2nd is lit in the houses of believers during storms for protection. The dying person is given the candle to hold like Mary held Jesus, the light of the world, when the time comes to meet Jesus face to face.

February 3 is the Feast Day of St. Blaise, a bishop and martyr who lived in the fourth century in Turkey and Armenia. On this day, the Church recalls a miracle cure associated with him and celebrates the blessing of the throats with candles. Blaise apparently saved the life of a boy who was choking on a fish bone, and he was presented with crossed candles by the mother. He said that anyone who lit a candle in his memory would be free of infection, thus candles are used in the traditional throat blessing. He is listed among the Fourteen Holy Helpers, saints revered as healers. He is the patron saint of throat illnesses, animals, wool combers and wool trading. The candles, blessed on Candlemas February 2, are crossed against the throat, and the following prayer is said:

"Through the intercession of Saint Blaise, bishop and martyr, may God deliver you from ailments of the throat and from every other evil. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

St. Blaise, pray for us!