

FROM FR. JASON



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Presentation of the Lord, which occurs 40 days after Christmas, and, at the same time, we give thanks for all those who consecrated their lives to the Lord, as it is also World Day for Consecrated Life.

February 2nd is also known as Candlemas. This was the day that, in keeping with Jewish law, Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus to the temple for the first time.

When Holy Simeon saw the baby, he had a lot to say, but we'll focus on the end part: "For my eyes have seen your salvation which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a LIGHT for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel."

From these words comes the traditional Catholic practice for the day, which is the blessing of candles. Families would bring a supply of candles for the year to Mass, and the priest would bless all of them. There is no reason why you cannot bring your candles and ask for them to be blessed after Mass. If you're not able to bring your candles to Mass with you, the head of the household can bless them at home with holy water while reciting the following:

All make the sign of the cross as the lay minister says: *Our help is in the name of the Lord.*

All reply: *Who made heaven and earth.*

Let us pray. God, almighty and all-mild, by your Word alone you created the manifold things in the world, and willed that that same Word by whom all things were made take flesh in order to redeem mankind; you are great and immeasurable, awesome and praiseworthy, a worker of marvels. Hence in professing his faith in you the glorious martyr and bishop, Blaise, did not fear any manner of torment but gladly accepted the palm of martyrdom. In virtue of which you bestowed on him, among other gifts, the power to heal all ailments of the throat. And now we implore your majesty that, overlooking our guilt and considering only his merits and intercession, it may please you to bless and sanctify and impart your grace to these candles. Let all men of faith whose necks are touched with them be healed of every malady of the throat, and being restored in health and good spirits let them return thanks to you in your holy Church, and praise your glorious name which is blessed forever; through Christ our Lord.

All: *Amen.* (They are sprinkled with holy water.)

The day after Candlemas is the Feast of St. Blaise. Because he miraculously cured a boy who was choking on a fish bone, the intercession of St. Blaise is now invoked against choking, as well as any other ailments of the throat.

The Catholic traditional practice for the day is the blessing of the throats. After Mass, everyone lines up again and the priest, ideally, but the Book of Blessings does allow for the use of lay ministers, using two of the newly blessed candles from Candlemas, tied together in the middle to form a cross, blesses the faithful one. If you are not able to attend Mass, the blessing may be given at home by the head of the household. Here is the home version of the blessing:

All make the sign of the cross as the lay minister says: *Our help is in the name of the Lord.*

All reply: *Who made heaven and earth.*

The lay minister reads a text of sacred Scripture.

Brothers and sisters, listen to the words of the Holy Gospel according to Mark.

Jesus said to the eleven, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents with their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

A lay minister touches the throat of each person with the crossed candles and, without making the sign of the cross, says the prayer of blessing.

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.

Each person responds: *Amen.*

Peace,