

Cover:

“St. Sebastian, Patron Saint of Our Parish”

by Nathan McDivett

Drawings of the Life of St. Sebastian

by Eric Armusik



St. Sebastian Parish



SAINT SEBASTIAN

In 1928, a new parish was carved out of the land west of the historic Portage Path in Akron and encompassing some 60 square miles. Originally under the patronage of St. Vincent, this people and land would need a new patron. Bishop Joseph Schrembs, the fifth bishop of the Diocese of Cleveland, placed the parish under the patronage of Saint Sebastian who, he said, was “one of the outstanding martyrs of the early Church. He is neither Celt, nor Teutan, not Latin, nor Slav, but a universal patron.” On this 90th anniversary of the parish, this devotional booklet was put together to help spread knowledge of our great patron and to strengthen devotion to him.



✠ PART I: EARLY LIFE ✠

Sebastian was born at Narbonne in Gaul and raised in Milan. Unlike St. Francis of Assisi, who loved the life of adventure and knight errantry and later gave it up to live a life of devotion to God, Sebastian was a devout, youthful servant of Christ who had an aversion to military life. Nonetheless, he entered into the ranks of the Roman army in hopes of helping Christians who were being actively persecuted under the Emperor Carinus.

PRAYER FOR APOSTOLIC FERVOR:

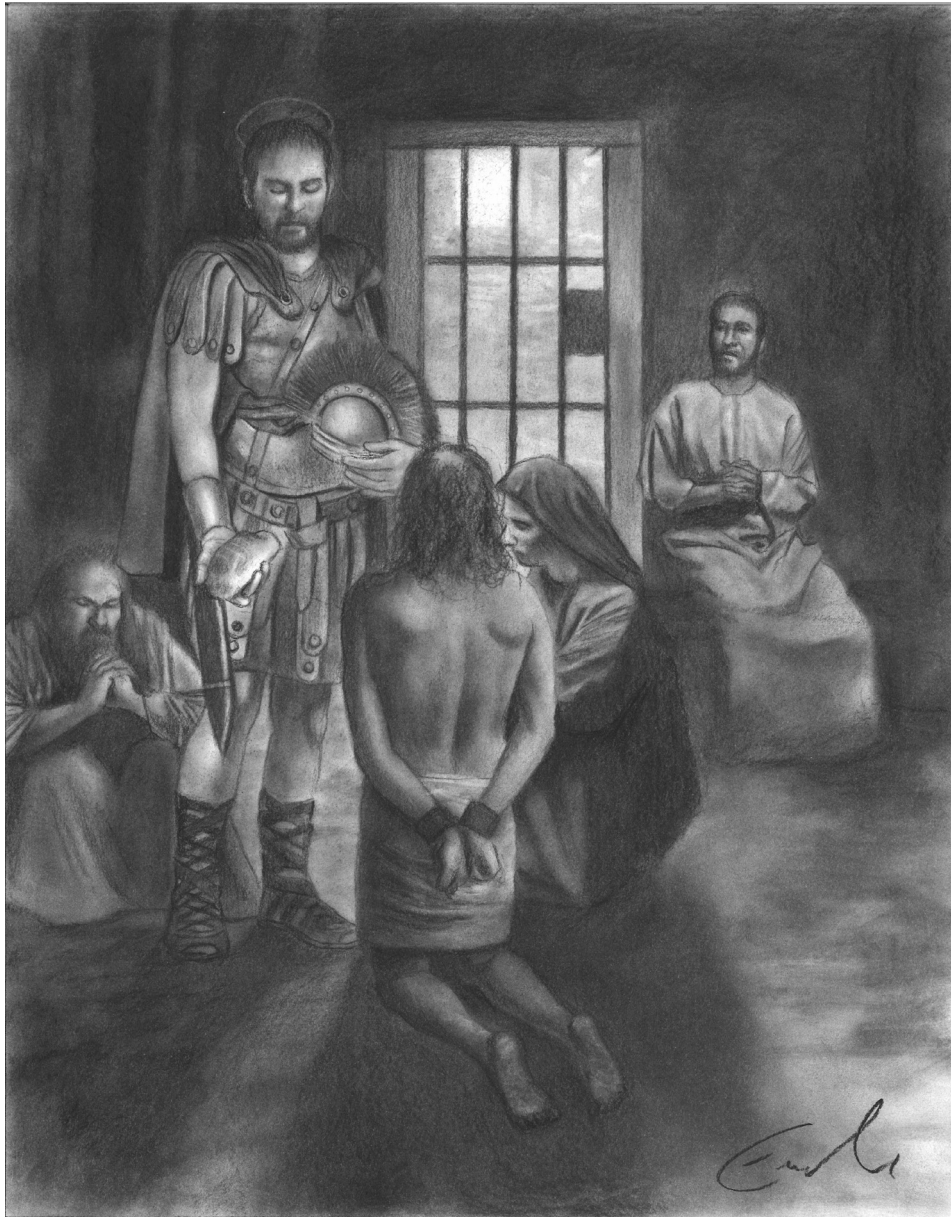
Dear St. Sebastian, you left the comfort of home and the safety of the countryside to come to the aid of Christians in Rome who were being persecuted. Whenever a voice is needed for the faith, whenever people of faith need help, when freedom of faith is endangered, give me the courage and fortitude to leave the comfort of my anonymity and stand up for the faith. May you be my example and guide, my protector and intercessor.

✠ PART II: MILITARY LIFE ✠

Under a sentence of death, Marcus and Marcellian were implored by their family and friends, with tears and pleas, to renounce the faith and save their lives. With the loss of their support, sanctioned persecution, and the impending threat of their execution, it appeared as though the two Christians were weakening in their resolve as men of faith. Sebastian, hearing of their plight, visited them and presented them with a long exhortation on fortitude of faith. The two were eventually executed, but they did so with easy conscience and an outstanding love of God.

PRAYER FOR FORTITUDE:

Dear Defender of the Faith, there are so many forces at work that would make it easy to walk away from the faith. During these times, I ask you to intercede for me and protect me and enliven in me the gift of constancy of faith, as you did the early martyrs of the faith.



✠ PART III: THE SPREAD OF THE FAITH ✠

Through Sebastian's ministering to the Christian prisoners, there came about the conversion of others. Sixteen prisoners, some administrators of the jail and then Chromatius, the governor of Rome who, being cured by Sebastian, converted, released the Christian prisoners, freed his slaves and resigned his prefectship.

PRAYER FOR CONVERSIONS:

Dear Converter of Souls, never let us fear that there is any heart out of the reach of hope of Christ's salvation. By your example, those who should have been least likely to convert were touched by the Holy Spirit and brought to the heart of their heavenly Father. Protect the faith of my family and friends, bring back those who have strayed, (especially N.) and bless my parish that it may be a welcome home for them. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

✠ PART IV: THE EMPEROR DIOCLETIAN ✠

The Emperor Carinus was slain by Diocletian, who took his place and continued the persecution of the Christians. Unaware of Sebastian's religious beliefs, The Emperor Diocletian came to admire him for his courage and character. Diocletian kept Sebastian close to his person and placed honors on him, eventually making him the leader of the elite Praetorian Guard.

When Diocletian went east on a campaign, there began a contest between Sebastian and a priest by the name of Polycarp, who instructed and baptized the converts that Sebastian had sent him. At issue was who would go along with the soldiers, some of whom were converting to the faith, and finish their instruction, and who would stay in Rome to continue the work there. An appeal was made to the pope and it was determined that Sebastian would be the one to remain in Rome.



PRAYER OF OBEDIENCE:

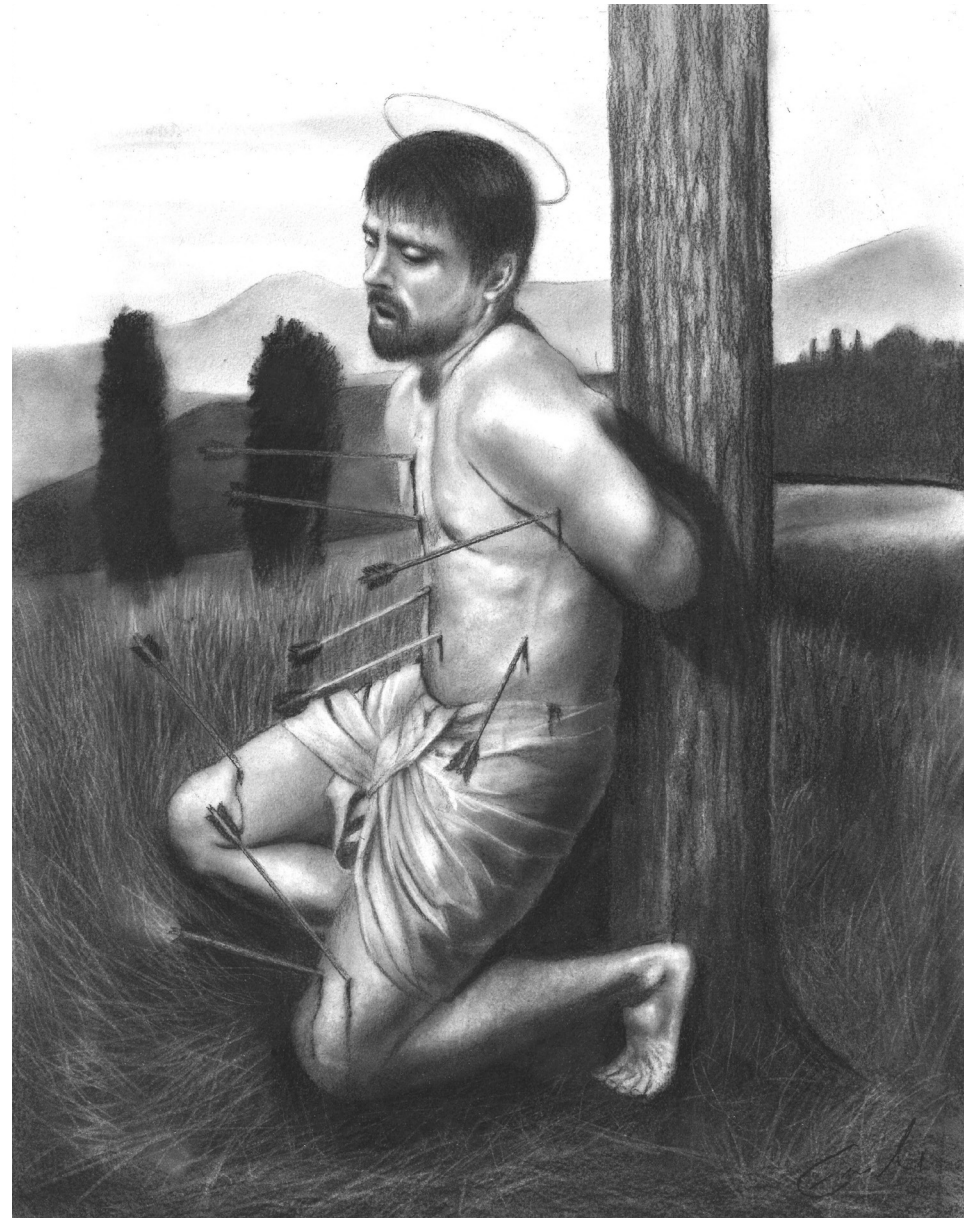
Dear Saint of Duty, when called upon, you fulfilled the duties that fell upon your shoulders. When I am asked to do things that seem too much of a burden, that seem out of proportion, unfulfilling, thankless or unfair, give me a joyful heart in my responsibilities and help me complete them. Allow me to know the joy of doing them for the Glory of God and for the salvation of my soul and the benefit of my brothers and sisters.

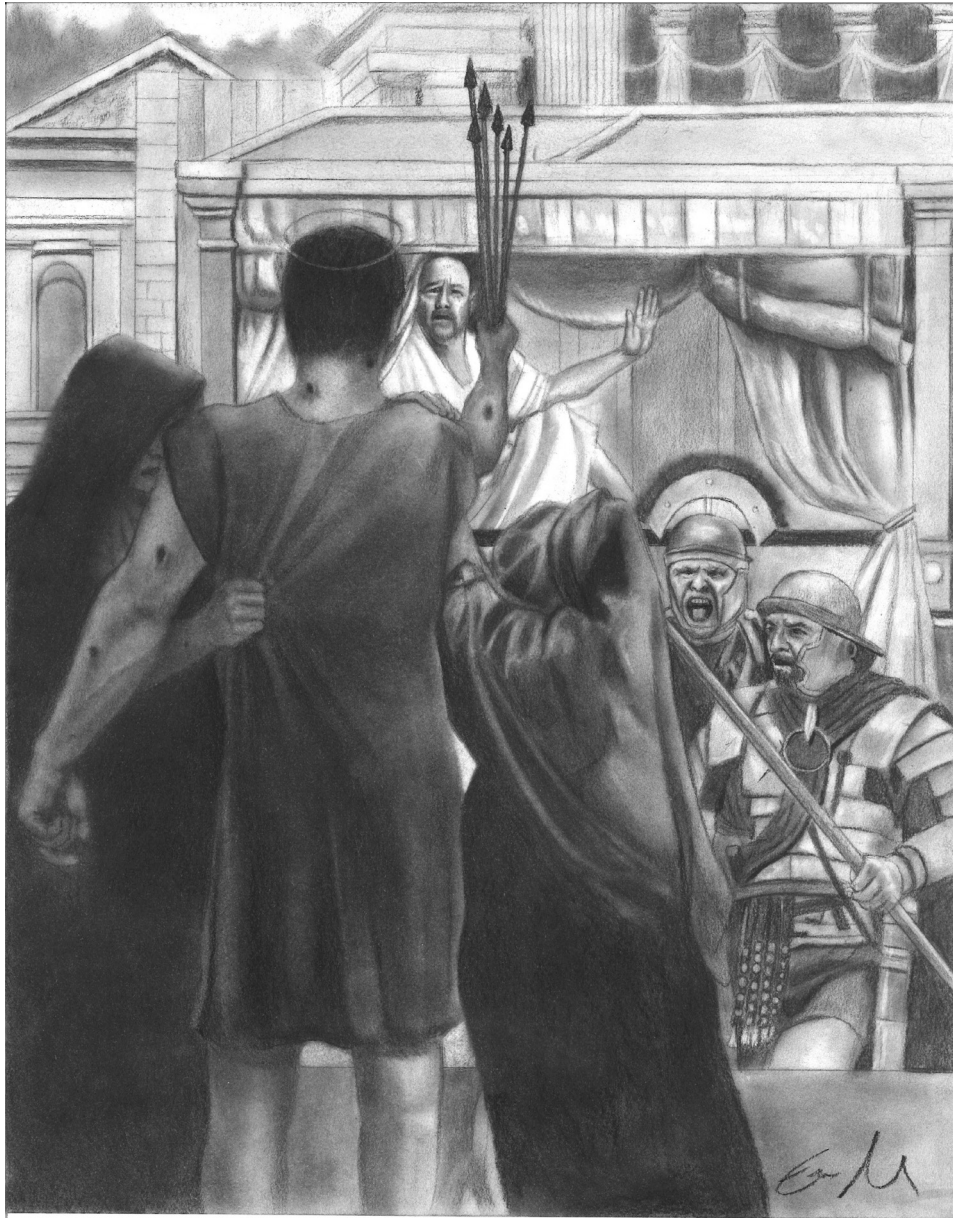
✠ PART V: PERSECUTIONS INCREASE ✠

In 286, the persecutions grew stronger. Christians went deeper into hiding. Zoe, an early convert of Sebastian, was arrested while praying at the tomb of St. Peter on the Feast of the Apostles, and was martyred by being hung by her heels over a fire. Tranquillinus, wanting to show his zeal for the faith, boldly went to pray before the tomb of St. Paul and was stoned to death. A number of other converts of Sebastian were likewise martyred, some tortured and thrown into the sea, others stretched on the rack and buried alive or beheaded, and two brothers were nailed by the feet to a post for 24 hours, and then were shot to death by arrows.

PRAYER TO FACE TRIAL:

Dear Exemplar of Faith, pray for me, not to be spared from all pain but by giving strength to bear it; not by removing all hardship but by conquering my cowardice, not by making my life easy but by strengthening my faith, hope and love. Not that I should be too concerned about my own desires, but that I will be a source of grace for others.





PART VI:

✠ SEBASTIAN IS SENTENCED TO DEATH ✠

It came to pass that Sebastian himself was denounced before Diocletian for being a Christian. Feeling betrayed, Diocletian berated Sebastian and accused him of ingratitude. He decreed that Sebastian should be handed over to be executed by being tied to a post and shot with arrows.

PRAYER FOR HUMILITY:

Please, good patron, help me when I lose heart because the good that I do goes unrecognized, unappreciated, or is answered with hostility. Let me do good not for the public honors that it gives me, but to show God my love of Him. Let me take heart, as you did, in Our Savior's words, "Forgive them Father for they know not what they do." Let me rise above human respect and find my consolation in sharing the difficulties of all the saints.

✠ PART VII: IRENE COMES TO SEBASTIAN'S AID ✠

A woman by the name of Irene went to retrieve the body of Sebastian in order to bury him, but found that he was still alive. She was able to have him taken to her home, and there she nursed him back to health.

PRAYER TO ST. SEBASTIAN:

Dear Commander at the Roman Emperor's Court, you chose to be also a soldier of Christ and dared to spread faith in the King of Kings – for which you were condemned to die. Your body, however, proved athletically strong and the executing arrows extremely weak. So another means to kill you was chosen and you gave your life to the Lord. May (athletes, Our Parish, our youth, N.) be always as strong in their faith as their Patron Saint so clearly has been. Amen



✠ PART VIII: SEBASTIAN SURVIVES ✠

Once he had regained his strength, Irene urged Sebastian to flee, but he refused. Rather than seeking the safety of the countryside, Sebastian stationed himself on some stairs past which he knew the emperor would be passing. When he did, Sebastian chastised him and denounced the cruel abuses he had perpetrated against the Christians.

PRAYER FOR STRENGTH:

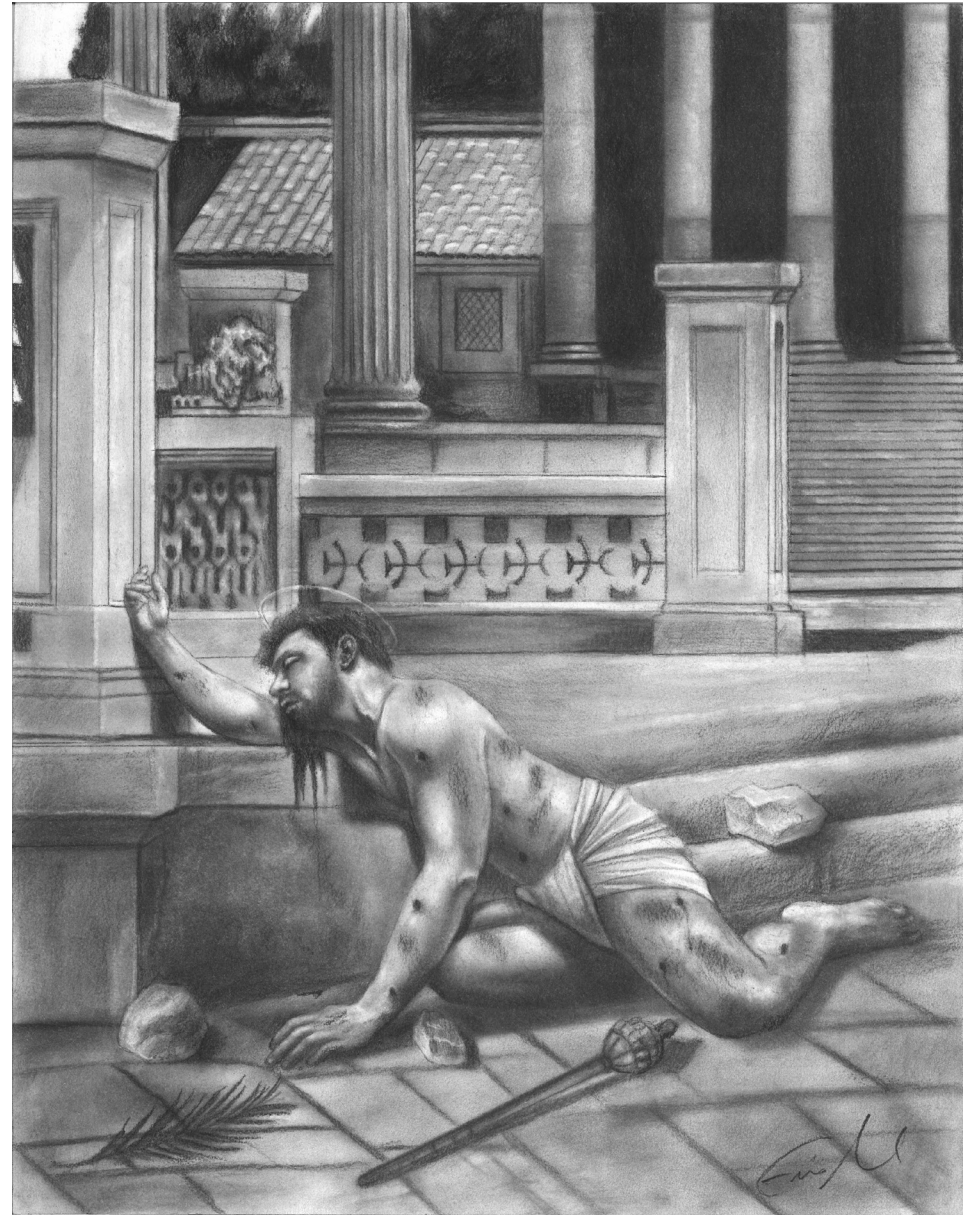
Dear Brave Defender of the Faith, may I never be cowed from the truth by those who are deemed important or powerful. May I always be a defender of all that is Good and True and Beautiful. Like you, may I always be more loyal to God than to fallible men.

✠ PART IX: THE DEATH OF SEBASTIAN ✠

At first, Diocletian, facing a man whom he thought he had executed and who was now speaking to him at such liberty, took fright thinking he was reckoning with a ghost. Eventually gathering his senses, Diocletian ordered his guards to seize Sebastian and kill him with cudgels and then have his broken body thrown into the common gutter. Another woman, Lucina, found his body and secretly had him buried in a place called *la catacombas*. It is here that the Basilica of St. Sebastian, one of the seven principle churches in Rome, now stands.

PRAYER OF LOVE OF GOD:

Dear Friend of Christ, help me to pause and consider the love Jesus has for me. Open my heart and mind to all He did and all He has in store for me. Let me be secure enough in that love that I may pass it on to others. And if it ever seems that I experience loss because of my devotion to God, let me remember that He can produce good out of anything, as He did through your twin martyrdoms. Amen.



✠ ST. SEBASTIAN MISCELLANEA ✠

St. Sebastian is most commonly known as the patron saint of athletes, archers, armorers, ironmongers, police officers, soldiers, the dying, the Swiss Guard and as protection against plagues and illnesses. But he is lesser known as patron saint as a guard against cattle disease, bookbinders, gardeners, gunsmiths, lace makers, lead workers, masons, racquet makers, World Youth Day of 2013, and numerous cities and dioceses.

St. Sebastian is considered a model of the lay apostolate.

The name Sebastian means “venerable” or “revered.”

The United States Navy had a patrol ship named the USS St. Sebastian in the early part of the 20th century.

The earliest depiction of St. Sebastian is a mosaic dated to 683 located in the Basilica of San Pietro ad Vincula, showing an older man with a beard. It was between the 13th and 15th centuries that his depiction became drastically younger, probably owing to the desire of artists to be able to paint the human form.

He was born in Gaul, which is part of modern France.

The Cleveland Museum of Art has a reliquary of St. Sebastian, which contains one of the long bones of his foot. The bone shows evidence of periostitis, a condition that affects persons who run or who lift heavy objects.

St. Sebastian Parish has a relic of St. Sebastian, which sits at the foot of the cross over the tabernacle.

St. Sebastian is known as a pre-congregation saint, since there was no formal process of the recognition of sainthood in the Church at the time.

O God, who did bestow on blessed Sebastian, your martyr, such wonderful strength of valour in his sufferings for You: grant us, after his example, to condemn, for love of You, all earthly prosperity, and to dread no sort of adversity.

– Gregorian Sacramentary

If there are many persecutions, there are many testings; where there are many crowns of victory, there are many trials of strength. It is then to your advantage if there are many persecutors; among many persecutions you may more easily find a path to victory.

— From a homily of St. Ambrose on St. Sebastian



✠ LITANY OF ST. SEBASTIAN ✠

Lord, have mercy on us! Christ, have mercy on us!

Lord, have mercy on us! Christ hear us! Christ, graciously hear us!

God, the Father of heaven,	Have mercy on us!
God, the Son, Redeemer of the world,	Have mercy on us!
God, the holy Ghost,	Have mercy on us!
Holy Trinity, one God,	Have mercy on us!

Holy Mary, Queen of Martyrs,	Pray for us.
Saint Sebastian,	Pray for us.
Invincible Martyr,	Pray for us.
Knight, noble by birth and fame,	Pray for us.
Glorious warrior and martyr of Christ,	Pray for us.
Patron and mirror of Christian soldiers,	Pray for us.
Despiser of the world,	Pray for us.
Conqueror of Satan,	Pray for us.
Comfort of the dying,	Pray for us.
Consoler of the afflicted,	Pray for us.
Announcer of the word of God,	Pray for us.
Protector and Patron of countries and cities,	Pray for us.
Saint Sebastian, perfect in virtue and wisdom,	Pray for us.
St. Sebastian, lover of God and men,	Pray for us.
St. Sebastian, might in word and work,	Pray for us.
St. Sebastian, who didst strengthen the Christians in torments and death,	Pray for us.
St. Sebastian, who didst fortify those wavering in their faith,	Pray for us.

St. Sebastian, who didst encourage the doubting to persevere to the end,	Pray for us.
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St. Sebastian, who, in flamed with love of God, didst despise the pains inflicted by the tyrant,	Pray for us.
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St. Sebastian, surrounded by celestial light,	Pray for us.
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St. Sebastian, instructed by the holy Angels,	Pray for us.
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St. Sebastian, giving speech to the dumb,	Pray for us.
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St. Sebastian, who for defending the truth wast wounded by arrows,	Pray for us.
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St. Sebastian, who wast put to death with clubs,	Pray for us.
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St. Sebastian, who wast crowned with eternal glory,	Pray for us.
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St. Sebastian, great intercessor for us with God,	Pray for us.
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St. Sebastian, endowed with power from God to avert pestilence and all contagious diseases,	Pray for us.
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Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world:	Spare us, O Lord!
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Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world:	Graciously hear us, O Lord!
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Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world:	Have mercy on us, O Lord!
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Christ, hear us! Christ, graciously hear us!

Let us pray. Mercifully look on our weakness, O almighty God; since the weight of our own evil deeds bears us down, may the glorious intercession of Thy blessed martyr Sebastian be our protection, through our Lord Jesus Christ Thy Son, Who with Thee and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, one God, world without end. Amen.

