

Valentine's Day

The History of Valentine's Day

Every February, across the country, candy, flowers, and gifts are exchanged between loved ones, all in the name of St. Valentine. But who is this mysterious saint and why do we celebrate this holiday? St. Valentine's Day, as we know it today, contains traces of both Christian and ancient Roman tradition.

The ancient Romans celebrated a holiday called Lupercalia, a festival of romance. Cupid, the Roman god of love is still shown as a winged infant ready to use his bow to shoot arrows into unsuspecting hearts. After the spread of Christianity the name of the holiday was changed to commemorate the death of a Christian martyr named Valentine on February 14, in the year 270.

One legend states that Valentine was a priest in Rome. When Emperor Claudius II decided that single men made better soldiers than those with wives and families, he outlawed marriage for young men. Valentine, realizing the injustice of the law, defied Claudius and continued to perform marriages for young lovers in secret. When Valentine's actions were discovered, Claudius ordered that he be put to death. Other stories suggest that Valentine may have been killed for attempting to help Christians escape harsh Roman prisons where they were often beaten and tortured.

According to another legend, Valentine actually sent the first 'valentine' greeting himself. While in prison, it is believed that Valentine fell in love with a young girl -- who may have been his jailor's daughter -- who visited him during his time in prison. Before his death, he wrote her a letter, which he signed 'From your Valentine,' an expression that is still in use today.

Valentine's Day Today

In America today men send chocolate or flowers, such as red roses or carnations, to their sweetheart or wife. Couples may have a romantic dinner date or invite their significant other to attend a concert or dance. Children in elementary school often exchange valentine cards with their classmates on Valentine's Day. Children sometimes make personalized, homemade valentines a school to give to their parents or to favorite relatives. People send valentines to family members or special friends to express their love and appreciation.

The colors of Valentine's Day are red and pink. Common symbols are hearts, cupid (a naked baby with a bow and arrow) and roses. Many stores sell special valentine candy, individual valentine cards and boxes of valentines (cards) for children to exchange at school.

God's Words on Love from the Bible (found in 1 Corinthians, chapter 13) :

What if I could speak all languages of humans and of angels? If I did not love others, I would be nothing more than a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. What if I could prophesy and understand all secrets and all knowledge? And what if I had faith that moved mountains? I would be nothing, unless I loved others. What if I gave away all that I owned and let myself be burned alive? I would gain nothing, unless I loved others.

Love is kind and patient, never jealous, boastful, proud, or rude. Love isn't selfish or quick tempered. It doesn't keep a record of wrongs that others do. Love rejoices in the truth, but not in evil. Love is always supportive, loyal, hopeful, and trusting. Love never fails!