



Happy Valentine's Day – Hot Springs Village

Description

?Valentine's Day: Some History and Personal Thoughts?

By Jeff Olson, February 14, 2022

The history of Valentine's Day and the story of its patron saint is actually a bit of a mystery, but we do know that it contains vestiges of both Christian and ancient Roman tradition. The Catholic Church recognizes at least three different saints named Valentine or Valentinus, all of whom were martyred. One legend relates that Valentine was a priest who served during the 3rd century 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. Realizing the injustice of the decree, Valentine defied Claudius and continued to perform marriages in secret for young lovers. When Valentine's actions were discovered, Claudius ordered him to be put to death.

Other stories contend that Valentine may have been killed for attempting to help Christians escape harsh Roman prisons. According to one legend, an imprisoned Valentine actually sent the first "valentine" greeting himself after he fell in love with a young girl, possibly his jailer's daughter who visited him during his confinement. Before his death, it is alleged that he wrote her a letter signed "From your Valentine." While the truth behind Valentine's legends is questionable, the stories all emphasize his nature and appeal as a sympathetic, heroic, and romantic figure.

?Why is Valentine's Day on February 14??

Some believe that Valentine's Day is celebrated in the middle of February to commemorate the anniversary of Valentine's death or burial. Others claim that the Christian church may have decided to place St. Valentine's feast day in the middle of February in an effort to "Christianize" the pagan celebration of Lupercalia which was a fertility festival dedicated to Faunus, the Roman god of agriculture. This celebration took place on the ides of February, or February 15.

In America, the tradition of the exchange of hand-made valentines probably began in the early

eighteenth century. In the 1840s, Esther A. Howland, known as the “Mother of the Valentine,” began selling the first mass-produced valentines in America.

?Memories of the Journey?

Many of us probably have our own fond memories and stories of Valentine’s Day, as do I. In looking back, I can remember the first Valentine’s Day that Denise and I enjoyed together not long after we met. Little did we know in 1978 that forty-four years later we would be in our forty-third year of marriage with three children and three grandchildren – and still celebrating Valentine’s Day together. And, while our first Valentine’s Day together was indeed memorable, it really had little to do in a substantial way to what grew into genuine love and devotion in the years to come. This came in the ensuing years through our Christian faith and commitment to each other as love’s scope and depth grew and that quitting would never be an option.

Among the things we learned were one another’s needs and how best to meet them. Humility – to admit wrongs over issues and disagreements (often petty). We learned that being right wasn’t always the most important purpose and outcome of an argument. We learned that an apology did not always serve to admit being wrong, but most importantly to restore our relationship. We learned not to end the day in anger or unforgiveness. We learned the power of prayer – praying earnestly for our unborn baby who was expected to have Down’s syndrome or be stillborn. We learned the inconvenience of love – getting up in the middle of the night to care for a crying baby or worse, a sick one. We learned how temporary and fragile life is when rushing a spouse on the brink of death with severe pneumonia to the hospital and praying that we get there in time. We learned that raising children means sacrificing for them and watching them grow and actually applying what you taught them – and always loving them unconditionally even when they make a wrong decision or let you down. We learned that parenting does not end at high school or college graduations – it is a lifetime role. We learned the blessed experience of holding a grandbaby for the first time and taking joy in the simple things in life. We learned that marriage is not a 50-50 conditional proposition but a 100-100 unconditional commitment. We learned that life is first not about either one of us – but about us and most importantly about God and His rightful place in the center of our marriage and family. Love is something that we do. Love is what we go through together. Such has been our experience, and we are still learning.

The point is that Cupid and all his minions are amateurs at best when it comes to love. While love may start out as a feeling, not until you begin life’s journey together committed to God and to each other in a covenantal relationship will it transform into the love required to transcend all circumstances, trials, and challenges and run and win life’s race in the way God intended? Happy Valentines Day! -Jeff & Denise Olson

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