

## Hurray, It's Valentine Day. Show Your Special Love Interest - You Love and Appreciate Him or Her.

Every February 14th, people across the world send greetings of love and friendship celebrating Valentines Day. Candy and flowers are popular gifts, expressing our love and esteem of the recipients. Schoolchildren also take part in this yearly exchange cards with heart and cupid motifs. Everyone knows this day as the romantic holiday of the year. Do you know the story behind the tradition? Who is this elusive figure known as St. Valentine?

Valentine was a Catholic priest who lived in Rome during the 3rd century. Claudius II was the reigning Emperor of Rome at the time, and was having trouble recruiting men into his army, as they were often dispatched to far off lands, and were so separated from their wives and families. Men were reluctant, unwilling to endure this separation from their loved ones.

Frustrated and angry, the Emperor Claudius concluded that unmarried men would have nothing to lose and therefore be more willing recruits. His solution to the problem was to decree that marriage for young men be outlawed. This did not sit well with the young men, and those in love found the humble priest Valentine more than willing to perform the marriage sacraments for the ardent lovers in secret. Unfortunately, Valentine was found out and arrested by Claudius. He was thrown into prison and sentenced to death.

One of the prison guards felt sympathy for this priest. To help him while away his time, he permitted his young daughter to pay visits to Valentine. The two became close friends. Before he was taken to the gallows, Valentine gave his friend a letter with the signature, "From your Valentine". And that has become the launch pad for the modern Valentine's Day!

Valentine died in 270 A.D. and was declared a Saint by the Vatican. Pope Gelasius who was in charge in the year 496 A.D., stated that February 14th would henceforth be considered as St. Valentine's Day. People in love could give free rein to feelings of love on this day! Thus, the material world became inferior to the powerful spiritual world!

By the Middle Ages, St. Valentines Day was one of the most popular European celebrations of the year. While imprisoned in the Tower of London in 1415, Charles, the Duke of Orleans, sent his wife a card on St. Valentines Day, a practice that continues to this day.

Some men offered clothing to the women of their choice. If the women accepted these gifts, there would be many couples engaged to be married! Names of girls would be kept in bowls and lots drawn. The names would be pinned on the sleeves of the boys. In this way, they publicly declared their love! It was like wearing one's heart on one's sleeves! Others thought of different gifts and practices by which they could impress their loved ones. In Wales, hearts and keys were carved on spoons. The keys gave a message to the recipient that this particular heart could be unlocked.

Those olden time customs have disappeared today. Other practices have taken their place. But this is the world's favorite unofficial holiday! Be it a gift of flowers, candy or cards--candlelight dinners or other celebrations, the message of love is the same. And we have St. Valentine to thank for this custom!

### About the Author

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