

St. Valentine

The legend of Saint Valentine dates back to early Rome. Each year the Romans celebrated a holiday in honor of their god Lupercus. It became a festival for lovers. On February 15, they also worshiped Juno, the goddess of marriage. On this festival day, the young women would drop their names into a jar so young men could draw them out. They would then be partners for the holiday.

But not everyone in Rome worshiped these legendary gods. Some Christians, who worshiped their one true God, also lived in the city under heavy persecution. In 496, Pope Gelasius wished to convey and proliferate the Christian view of true love. With that goal in mind, he looked for a martyr who had exhibited a life of loving others. He came across the story of St. Valentine:

St. Valentine was a Christian doctor who lived to help other people get well. He would even pray for his patients after he had given them medicine. In those days it was illegal for Roman soldiers to marry. Claudius "The Cruel" wanted all men to go to war, so he did not allow them to marry. St. Valentine felt for these young people in love and would perform secret wedding ceremonies. When Claudius discovered what St. Valentine was doing, he had him jailed. While in jail, St. Valentine met the jailer's daughter, a young blind girl. In Rome during this era, the blind were seen as cursed, as unlovable, but St. Valentine befriended her and treated her blindness.

St. Valentine was sentenced to die on February 14. It was said that he wrote a note of encouragement to the jailer's daughter and signed it "From your Valentine." Legend says that when the jailer's daughter unrolled the papyrus note from Valentine, for the first time in her life she could see.

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