



LOVE ONE ANOTHER

***What you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do to Me.
Matthew 25***

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? The history of Valentine's Day -- and its patron saint -- is shrouded in mystery. But we do know that February has long been a month of romance. St. Valentine's Day, as we know it today, contains vestiges of both Christian and ancient Roman tradition. So, who was Saint Valentine and how did he become associated with this ancient rite? Today, the Catholic Church recognizes at least three different saints named Valentine or Valentinus, all of whom were martyred.

One legend contends that Valentine was a priest who served during the third 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 -- his crop of potential soldiers. Valentine, realizing the injustice of the decree, 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 one 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 confinement. Before his death, it is alleged that he wrote her a letter, which he signed 'From your Valentine,' an expression that is still in use today. Although the truth behind the Valentine legends is murky, the stories certainly emphasize his appeal as a sympathetic, heroic, and, most importantly, romantic figure. It's no surprise that by the Middle Ages, Valentine was one of the most popular saints in England and France.

Saint Valentine's myth or legend neither makes nor breaks the day. The true sentiment of this day is that we remember that we are called to love one another as Christ has loved us.



PRESENCE OF GOD

With our hands on our hearts - the heart is often thought of as the symbol of love – we call to mind how overwhelming is God’s love for us. He called us forth into existence, He sustains us, and He called His Son to redeem us. We rejoice and give thanks for God’s continual presence among us. We are God’s chosen and beloved work of art.

Glory to You, Source of All Being, Eternal and Redeeming Word, and the Spirit Most Holy Who calls us to life, to holiness, to creativity, and to love. Amen.

HYMN: WE HAVE BEEN TOLD

***1. I am the vine, you are the branches,
and all who live in Me will bear great fruit.***

***Refrain: We have been told, we’ve seen His face, and heard His voice
alive in our hearts; Live in My love with all your heart,
as the Father has loved Me, so I have loved you.***

***2. You are my friends, if you keep My commands,
no longer slaves, I call you friends.***

***3. No greater love is there than this:
to lay down one’s life, for a friend.***

PSALM 18

***I open my heart to You, O God
for You are my strength, my fortress,
the rock on Whom I build my life.***

***I have been lost in my fears and my angers
caught up in falseness, fearful, and furious
I cried to You in my anguish.***

You have brought me to an open space.

You saved me because You took delight in me.

***I try to be good, to be just, to be generous
to walk in Your ways.***

I fail, but You are my Light.

You make my darkness bright

***With Your help, I continue to scale the walls
and break down the barriers that fragment me.***

***I will continue to strive to be whole, and happy, and wise
and know Your love always.***

PRAYER BEFORE THE SCRIPTURE READING

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God!

The Gospel of Christ. Praise be to You, O Christ!

The grass withers

and the flower fades,

but the Word of the Lord endures forever. Amen! Alleluia!

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN-4: 19-5:3

Beloved, we love God because

He first loved us.

If anyone says, "I love God,"

but hates his/her brother or sister, that person is a liar;

for whoever does not love a brother or sister whom they have seen cannot love God whom they have not seen.

This is the commandment we have from God:

Whoever loves God must also love their brother and sister.

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten by God, and everyone who loves the Father

loves also the One begotten by Him.

In this way we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey His commandments.

The Word of the Lord!

REFLECTION

No one has ever seen God, although we will.

But if we love one another, God lives in us by His Spirit.

We are not simply readers of some old book. We are not just admirers of some shadowy figure from the past. We are not the custodians of some ancient tradition. We are participants in the drama of divine love! We love one another, because we are on intimate terms with the God Who is love. We are inhabited by God.

His love is made complete in us. Isn't God's love perfect, infinite? And God does not consider His love complete until He sees it growing and maturing in His people. God's love is proved at the cross, proclaimed in the Word, but perfected in us.

So how can we be sure that our experience of God is true and valid? How can we know that at the great Day of Judgment we will not be turned away? "By this shall all people know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

GOD OF MY LIFE

Only in love can I find You, my God.

In love the gates of my soul spring open, allowing me to breathe a new air of freedom and forget my own petty self.

In love my whole being streams forth out of the rigid confines of narrowness and anxious self-assertion, which makes me a prisoner of my own poverty and emptiness.

In love all the powers of my soul flow out toward You, wanting never more to return, but to lose themselves completely in You, since by Your love You are the inmost center of my heart, closer to me than I am to myself

But when I love You, when I manage to break out of the narrow circle of self and leave behind the restless agony of unanswered questions, when my blinded eyes no longer look merely from afar

*and from the outside upon Your unapproachable brightness,
and much more when You yourself, O Incomprehensible One,
have become through love the inmost center of my life,
then I can bury myself entirely in You, O mysterious God,
and with myself all my questions.*

— Karl Rahner SJ



PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

We turn to You, Lord, and thank You for Your presence and love in our lives and humbly pray with confidence:

RESPONSE: LORD OF LOVE AND MERCY, HEAR OUR PRAYER.

- ❖ *Holy God, may we always live as Your loving Children faithful to Your commandments, we pray:*
- ❖ *Lord Jesus, may we imitate Your love and concern in our everyday interactions with others, we pray:*
- ❖ *Spirit of God, lead us to love God and one another, we pray:*
- ❖ *We especially remember all those who protect us and care for us, we pray:*
- ❖ *We hold up to You, O God, our spiritual and governmental leaders, we pray:*
- ❖ *We give thanks for those who perform quiet acts of kindness for others, we pray:*
- ❖ *We ask for hope and strength for all who suffer from loneliness, heartache, grief, sickness, wars and acts of violence, we pray:*
- ❖ *We ask that we may continue to be instruments of Your love in our world, we pray:*
- ❖ *We encourage one another to have a profound respect for the gift of life and all of creation, we pray:*

*Jesus is quoted in the Bible as saying
that the two greatest commandments are to first love God
with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength,
and then love one another.*

*We are to love one another
even when some are doing what God says not to,
and we are also called to love our enemies.*

*Saint John Baptist de La Salle
and all you holy Brothers who have gone before us,
help us to proclaim the love of God to all whom we meet.*

Live Jesus in our hearts. Forever!