



The Origin of Valentine's Day

Some Various accounts from various media sources: the validity of the priest Valentine in history is questionable; but even so—what in all this should make Valentine's Day a celebration of interest to a Remnant Believer? I have noticed that in all pagan-origin 'holidays' the eating of candy and harmful indulgences of this type always play a big part. That ought to clue in a true Christian to walk away. TC

Traditionally, mid-February was a time to meet and court prospective mates. As early as the fourth century B.C., the Romans engaged in an annual rite to the god Lupercus. The names of young women were placed in a box and drawn by adolescent men. The resulting random matches became companions for the following year. Church fathers, determined to end this pagan fertility rite, selected the martyred Saint Valentine to replace Lupercus. Valentine was imprisoned by the Roman emperor Claudius II for secretly joining young lovers in matrimony. While in prison awaiting execution, Valentine signed a farewell message to the jailer's daughter "From Your Valentine," a phrase that is still used today.

Over time, the Lupercian lottery was replaced with the custom of Roman men offering women their admired hand-written greetings of affection on February 14. As Christianity spread, so did the Valentine's Day card. The earliest card known to exist was sent in 1415 by Charles, Duke of Orleans, to his wife, while he was imprisoned in the tower of London. Cupid, the naked cherub armed with arrows dipped in a love potion, became a popular valentine image. Cupid is the son of Venus, the Roman goddess of love and beauty.

In China, very few people celebrate Valentine's Day before China adopted the OPEN-DOOR policy. In recent years, as the Western culture infuses itself into China, more and more young people there, especially the college students, start to appreciate this old western custom and make this day a special day to express the love feelings to their beloved. (e.z. modified from "The Community Focus")

Be My Valentine! Origins of the World's Most Romantic Holiday

-- Hearts and flowers, cupids and candy -- today's symbols of Valentine's Day are well removed from the circumstances which launched this annual display of overt affection. Established as a religious holiday, the Feast of St. Valentine honored the Christian martyr who lost his life during the reign of Roman Emperor Claudius II.

According to various historical accounts, Valentine, a holy priest in Rome, was persecuted for his Christian faith and executed on Feb. 14, approximately 270 A.D. His crimes against the Roman Empire differ depending upon the source, but some believe he was arrested for secretly performing Christian

Valentine History

marriages despite Claudius' orders to the contrary, while others cite his penchant to assist Christian martyrs in their escape from Roman prisons as his primary offense.

Either way, Valentine became a symbol of love and compassion and was conveniently plucked from obscurity several hundreds of years later when the Christian church gained a stronger foothold in Europe and set about eradicating pagan rituals.

Again, depending on the source, we're told that the Feast of St. Valentine came to replace a mid-February fertility festival called Lupercalia or that it was established to abolish a heathen village custom of boys drawing the names of girls on the 15th of the month in honor of the goddess Februata Juno. Still others claim that sending greetings to loved ones on Feb. 14 dates to the middle ages when it was believed that this day marked the beginning of the mating season for birds.

So there you have it -- crime, passion, forbidden displays of affection -- all the makings of a great love story. No wonder it endures to this day!

St. Valentine's Day: 5th Century Rome

"...The Catholic Church's attempt to paper over a popular pagan fertility rite with the clubbing death and decapitation of one of its own martyrs is the origin of this lovers' holiday.

As early as the fourth century B.C., the Romans engaged in an annual young man's rite of passage to the god Lupercus. The names of teenage women were placed in a box and drawn at random by adolescent men; thus, a man was assigned a woman companion, for their mutual entertainment and pleasure (often sexual), for the duration of a year, after which another lottery was staged. Determined to put an end to this eight-hundred-year-old practice, the early church fathers sought a "lovers" saint to replace the deity Lupercus. They found a likely candidate in Valentine, a bishop who had been martyred some two hundred years earlier.

In Rome in A.D. 270, Valentine had enraged the mad emperor the mad emperor Claudius II, who had issued an edict forbidding marriage. Claudius felt that married men made poor soldiers, because they were loath to leave their families for battle. The empire needed soldiers, so Claudius, never one to fear unpopularity, abolished marriage.

Valentine, bishop of Interamna, invited young lovers to come to him in secret, where he joined them in the sacrament of matrimony. Claudius learned of this "friend of lovers," and had the bishop brought to the palace. The emperor, impressed with the young priest's dignity and conviction, attempted to convert him to the Roman gods, to save him from otherwise certain execution. Valentine refused to renounce Christianity and imprudently attempted to convert the emperor. On February 24, 270, Valentine was clubbed, stoned, then beheaded.

History also claims that while Valentine was in prison awaiting execution, he fell in love with the blind daughter of the jailer, Asterius. Through his unswerving faith, he miraculously restored her sight. He signed a farewell message to her "From Your Valentine," a phrase that would live long after its author died.

From the Church's standpoint, Valentine seemed to be the ideal candidate to usurp the popularity of Lupercus. So in A.D. 496, a stern Pope Gelasius outlawed the mid-February Lupercian festival. But he was clever enough to retain the lottery, aware of Romans' love for games of chance. Now into the box that had once held the names of available and willing single women were placed the names of saints. Both men and women extracted slips of paper, and in the ensuing year they were expected to emulate the life of the saint whose name they had drawn. Admittedly, it was a different game, with different

Valentine History

incentives; to expect a woman and draw a saint must have disappointed many a Roman male. The spiritual overseer of the entire affair was its patron saint, Valentine. With reluctance, and the passage of time, more and more Romans relinquished their pagan festival and replaced it with the Church's holy day.

Valentine Cards

Traditionally, mid-February was a Roman time to meet and court prospective mates. The Lupercian lottery (under penalty of mortal sin), Roman young men did institute the custom of offering women they admired and wished to court hand-written greetings of affection on February 14. The cards acquired St. Valentine's name:

As Christianity spread, so did the Valentine's Day card. The earliest extant card was sent in 1415 by Charles, duke of Orleans, to his wife while he was a prisoner in the Tower of London. It is now in the British Museum.

In the sixteenth century, St. Francis de Sales, bishop of Geneva, attempted to expunge the custom of cards and reinstate the lottery of saints' names. He felt that Christians had become wayward and needed models to emulate. However, this lottery was less successful and shorter-lived than Pope Gelasius's. And rather than disappearing, cards proliferated and became more decorative. Cupid, the naked cherub armed with arrows dipped in love potion, became a popular valentine image. He was associated with the holiday because in Roman mythology he is the son of Venus, goddess of love and beauty.

By the seventeenth century, handmade cards were oversized and elaborate, while store-bought ones were smaller and costly. In 1797, a British publisher issued "The Young Man's Valentine Writer," which contained scores of suggested sentimental verses for the young lover unable to compose his own. Printers had already begun producing a limited number of cards with verses and sketches, called "mechanical valentines," and a reduction in postal rates in the next century ushered in the less personal but easier practice of mailing valentines. That, in turn, made it possible for the first time to exchange cards anonymously, which is taken as the reason for the sudden appearance of racy verse in an era otherwise prudishly Victorian. The burgeoning number of obscene valentines caused several countries to ban the practice of exchanging cards. In Chicago, for instance, late in the nineteenth century, the post office rejected some twenty-five thousand cards on the ground that they were not fit to be carried through the U.S. mail.

The first American publisher of valentines was printer and artist Esther Howland. Her elaborate lace cards of the 1870's cost from five to ten dollars, with some selling for as much as thirty-five dollars. Since that time, the valentine card business has flourished. With the exception of Christmas, Americans exchange more cards on Valentine's Day than at any other time of the year...."