

Resources for St. Valentine's Day

'...From your Valentine': The story of St Valentine

In ancient Rome the festival of Lupercalia began on February 15, the day supposedly when in early Spring the birds started mating. On the eve of the festival, young girls wrote love messages and placed them in a large urn. The young men of Rome each drew out a message from the urn and would court the girl whose name they had picked for the duration of the festival. This courtship often continued and ended up in marriage. However, in the early third century, the Roman Empire was experiencing a shortage of much needed soldiers for its many military campaigns. Thinking that marriage was stopping men from entering the army, the Roman Emperor at the time, Claudius II, cancelled all engagements and weddings! In defiance, Valentine, a priest of Rome, secretly married young couples until his eventual arrest and imprisonment.

While in prison, Valentine prayed for the blind daughter of one of his jailers. Before his execution for the faith on February 14, 269, Valentine wrote a farewell message to the girl, urging her to stay close to God and signing it "from your Valentine". It is said that when the little girl opened up the message that a yellow crocus fell out; looking down on the flower, the girl saw colour for the first time. She had been cured.

The original Roman festival was Christianised by Pope Gelasius in 498 AD when he named February 14 as St Valentine's Day. The crocus, which flowers about this time of the year, is also known as St Valentine's flower.

The Irish bit of the story...In 1835 Fr John Spratt, a Carmelite priest in Dublin, who had been responsible for the building of the new church to Our Lady of Mount Carmel at Whitefriar Street, visited Rome. He had quite a reputation as a preacher and was invited to

preach at the famous church, the Gesu. The elite of Rome flocked to hear him and he received many tokens of esteem from prominent members of the Church. Pope Gregory gifted him the remains of St Valentine.

The reliquary containing the remains were received by the archbishop of Dublin, Dr Murray, on November 10th 1836 with a solemn procession to Whitefriar Street, followed by a Solemn High Mass. After the death of Fr Spratt, devotion to the relics declined and they were left to collect dust in a back room until the renovation of the church in the 1950/60's. Then they were returned to prominence with an altar and shrine being constructed to house them and enable them to be venerated. The statue of St Valentine was carved by Irene Broe and depicts the saint in the red vestments of a martyr and, appropriately, holding a crocus in his hand.



Blessing of Commitment

(The following Blessing of Commitment may take place after the homily
before the Prayers of the Faithful.)

God who created us in love and for love,
from earliest times your people called you 'rock' and 'stronghold'
and 'mighty fortress',
as they learned to appreciate your absolute loyalty and dependability;
in Jesus' heart of love you have given the world
the enduring statement that you are everlasting, faithful love.

In all the power of who you are,
bless each one here on their journey of commitment.

Bless those who are preparing to celebrate their marriage,
that as they await the day of their wedding
they will grow in mutual respect and in their love for one another,
that through their companionship and prayer together
they will be truly ready to enter into the bond of love that is marriage.

Bless those who are newly married
that in these early days of their life together
they will possess the gifts that will enhance their married life,
the gift of listening, the gift of putting the other first,
the gift of self-knowledge, the gift of reliability and faithfulness.

Bless those who in this year are celebrating a jubilee of marriage,
that, while giving thanks to God for the wonderful gift of these
many years together,
they will continue to be ever renewed in their marriage
in good times and in bad, finding strength and joy in their
faithful love for one another
and God's love for them,
and so bear even greater witness to each of us here to the true
nature of love.

May the God of love and peace abide in you, guide your steps, and strengthen your hearts in his love, now and forever.

And may God bless you ✠ in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Some of the following prayers may also be included in the Prayer of the Faithful of Mass of the Day.

1. We pray for our Church leaders and all who actively support marriage in our faith community. We pray for God's continued blessing on ACCORD and the many lay movements who work with couples and families to help enrich their life together. Lord, hear us.
2. We remember and pray for all couples who are preparing for marriage at this time. As they look forward to this happy day, may they create a space for God in their relationship, trusting in God's power to make them strong and fulfilled in their commitment to one another. Lord, hear us.
3. We pray for all married couples, that in whatever part of life's journey they find themselves, they may have God's loving presence at the centre of their union, to support them all their days in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, until the evening of life comes. Lord, hear us.
4. We pray for those who have known the disappointment and hurt of marriage breakdown. May they be touched by the love of God who walks each step with them and who desires a full and happy life for them. Lord, hear us.
5. We pray for those who are single. That they may appreciate the witness to God's love that they can and do give in the Church and in the world as they live out the commitment of their baptism. Lord, hear us.
6. We pray for those who have experienced the death of their husband or wife. In the midst of their sorrow may they also have the consolation and joy of cherished memories of married life with all its struggles and challenges and achievements together, of a married love that ultimately endured all things and bore all things. Lord, hear us.
7. We pray for (N. and for) all who have died and who now have a place in heaven at the wedding feast of the Lamb. Lord, hear us.

A Valentine's Day Prayer

I said a Valentine prayer for You
and asked the Lord above
to fill your heart and bless your soul
with the precious gift of love.

I asked Him for sincere love
the kind that's meant to stay
just like the generous love
You give to those You touch each day.

I prayed for love from family
and from every cherished friend
then I asked the Lord to give you
His love that knows no end.

Heal A Wounded Heart Prayer

Lord, please help me heal from grief, loss and the pain of love gone wrong.

Let me leave all the deep heartache in my past and be whole and happy again.

In my fear of never finding true love, I admit have been needy and overly-anxious; desperate and too willing to settle for what is not right for me.

Please calm that need in me that has led to unwise choices.

Fill the emptiness in my heart that makes me crave unhealthy love.

Restore my faith in real love and healthy relationships,
and grant me the ability to love myself fully.

All me, Lord, to feel lovable and wanted again from within.

Let the healing process begin inside my heart today.

In Jesus' name I pray, **Amen.**

Prayer to St. Valentine

O glorious advocate and protector,
St. Valentine,
look with pity upon our wants,
hear our requests,
attend to our prayers,
relieve by your intercession,
the miseries under which we labour,
and obtain for us the divine blessing,
that we may be found worthy
to join you in praising the
Almighty for all eternity:
through the merits of
Our Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

St. Valentine's Day – School Prayer Service

The feast is worth celebrating as it reminds students that all love is a reflection of God's love for us. Just before St. Valentine died he wrote her a letter which he signed "Your Valentine" Because of this he has become the patron saint of engaged couples.

{Prior to the Prayer Service: invite the children to make a Valentine card for a parent or grandparent - these can be used at the service.}

Opening Prayer:

God of love, you give us St. Valentine as an example of love. As we gather to celebrate the feast of this loving and caring saint we ask you to bless our friendships. May the love and affection we share with each other, always come from a sense of care and respect. May we always follow the example of your Son, Jesus Christ, who is Lord forever and ever. **Amen.**

First Reading

1John 4:7-12

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

Gospel

John 3:16-17

'For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

‘Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

REFLECTION

Student 1:

Father, you have loved us from eternity without conditions. Whether we are big or small, rich or poor, intelligent or not, no matter what language we speak, no matter what country we are from – it makes no difference to you.

Student 2:

Help us to love and respect each other always.

Student 3:

Help us to focus on the positive, to see what is good in the people we meet.

Student 4:

Help us to grow in understanding and respect for others.

Student 5:

Help us to encourage the goodness and the giftedness of others.

Student 6:

Lord, as we increase our ability to love as Jesus did, help us to build your kingdom here on earth.

A prayer of blessing on the Valentine cards

Generous and loving God, you love us as only a parent can - without conditions, without limits.

You fill us with your grace and love.

Bless the people we made these cards for.

May these cards bring joy and happiness to those who receive them.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen

Prayers of the Faithful may be included.

Our Father.....

Closing Prayer:

God, source of life and love,
we ask you to bless our families and friends.
Help us to see that the love we experience from others
is only a reflection of your great love for us.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Sources:

Adapted from: Diocese of Kerry
Kandle.ie

Goodnewsuk.com