

LOVE



IN DEFENSE OF THE
UNBREAKABLE BOND

The roots of today's celebration of **Valentine's Day** grew out of a tradition that began long ago in ancient Rome. A Roman *Feast of Lupercalia* was celebrated on February 15. This ancient festival involved the celebration of fertility, and honored two Roman gods, Juno and Pan. Among the festivities of this occasion was the practice of young maidens writing *love messages*. The messages were placed in a large urn and then drawn out by unmarried men who then courted the fair maidens whose message they had chosen.

In A.D. 496, when the Roman Church was the major power in Europe, Pope Gelasius outlawed the celebration of Lupercian Festival. But he cleverly replaced that feast with a holiday he called "St. Valentine's Day." To make the life of this "holy man" called "Valentine" more appealing for those looking for a "love feast" similar to the former "festival of Lupercalia," they may have embellished Valentine's life story a little bit. Since it happened so long ago, records no longer exist. But if it didn't happen this way, it certainly makes for an interesting story.

The story goes that just before 270 A.D., the head of the Roman Empire, Emperor Claudius II, had issued an edict forbidding marriage for all of his soldiers. He believed that married men made poor soldiers, not wanting to leave their families to go to battle. He also considered it to be a distraction for his soldiers to give their "hearts" in marriage when their focus should be serving the empire. He forbade all marriages and betrothals. This is where Valentinus comes on the scene. He was a courageous leader of one of the early churches of Interamna. He considered the emperor's ban to be a great injustice to the young men and women. He had compassion for the young couples who were so in **love**. He recognized that humans had a deep and normal need for marriage. Valentinus ignored the Emperor's decree and was caught in the act of marrying a young couple. The emperor was incensed. He had Valentinus seized. When he refused to change his views, Valentinus was put in prison to await execution for secretly conducting several wedding ceremonies. On February 14 of 270, Valentinus was stoned and then beheaded. But tradition tells us that while Valentine was still in

prison he corresponded with his dear friends in the church by sending little letters and love notes signed, as it were, "**From Your Valentine.**" Another story says Valentine had made friends with many children. After he was imprisoned, the children missed Valentine and tossed loving notes between the bars of his cell window. These tales may explain why people exchange loving messages on Valentine's Day, and also makes a handy link between this "Christian celebration" and its pagan predecessor, the Roman Feast of Lupercalia.

Many of the popular customs associated with Valentine's Day today undoubtedly had their origin in a conventional belief generally received in Europe in the Middle Ages that on 14 February, i.e. half way through the second month of the year, the birds began to pair.

The Emperor's ban on marriage for his soldiers was soon lifted when it became impossible to enforce. But this story now takes an odd turn. A short time after the death of Valentine, the Roman Church came under the leadership of a man named Augustine. Strange as it may seem, his teaching on marriage resembled that of the former emperor Claudius. Augustine was himself a man tormented by uncontrolled sexual appetites. He finally came to the conclusion that for a man to be truly a "good **soldier** of the Faith," he must not be distracted by any "carnal thoughts" like marriage. He thus instituted a practice that is still observed by some of the established Churches today, that all the "holy leaders" of the church must remain **unmarried (celibate)**. Predictably this rule of celibacy gave rise to many nasty perversions in their all-male dwelling places. In the new book, *The Changing Face of the Priesthood*, the author (Donald Cozzens) quotes a detailed study about the present-day aftermath of Augustine's "celibacy mandate." It exposes the percentages among their "priests" of HIV and AIDS, and the multiple cases of pedophile attacks that haunt the churches today. Valentine was correct in calling the mandate against marriage a grave injustice.

If old "Saint" Valentine heard this story he would certainly roll over in his tomb. For he had given his life in protest against the injustice of man not being allowed to marry a wife as God had ordained, only to see his own church a hundred years later impose this same prohibition upon their own men... and so goes the great **LOVE STORY** of Valentine.... The legend of Valentine is an interesting one, and gives us some valuable insights....

From my heart to yours:

Some legends say that Valentine's Day was called Bird's Wedding Day long ago. It was believed that birds selected their mates and began to breed in the second week of the second month of the year. In these confusing days we live in, we are looking for a new day when there can be a restoration of pure love relationships. Old fashioned morals and life-long marriage covenants make this day of celebrating "love" much more meaningful.

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Cover: Eben & Leah bound together in an unbreakable bond of marriage twenty years later, October 16, 1999

