



Who was the real St. Valentine?

Remember, today isn't Valentine's Day—it's *Saint* Valentine's Day.

You have to wonder whether St. Valentine and St. Patrick commiserate in Heaven about their feast days being somewhat *obscured* by their popular celebrations.

Treating your sweetheart to a nice dinner or a box of chocolates on this day is certainly a nice thing to do. However, as a part of your celebrations, be sure to call to mind *Saint* Valentine, whose real story is usually forgotten on his feast day.

We actually don't know a lot for sure about this saint. He was either a Roman priest or a bishop in central Italy who was martyred in the 3rd century. His remains are buried along the Via Flaminia in Rome.



The connection between him and romantic love is also a bit uncertain. One legend says that he secretly married Christian couples, a grave offense according to the persecuting government. Some versions say that this favor was done particularly for Roman soldiers, who were not allowed to marry since—the government thought—this would make them unwilling to risk their lives in war.

The customs we associate with St. Valentine's Day are traceable to the Middle Ages. Based on the tradition that birds began to pair on St. Valentine's Day, lovers exchanged letters and tokens of affection on this day. We see references to these customs in literature from 14th- and 15th-century France and England.

Whatever the veracity of the legends surrounding the life of St. Valentine, we know that this holy priest existed, and that he died for his faith during a time of bitter persecution. His very status as a martyr makes him an apt patron for love: he and his fellow-martyrs illustrate to us, through their sufferings, the depth of their love for Christ, Who is Love Himself.

As you enjoy your day with your sweetheart, remember the love of St. Valentine, which gave him the courage to suffer everything for the sake of his Beloved—and made him a saint.

Not all of us are called to prove our love by physical martyrdom, but we can live out the vocation to love by sacrificing ourselves in smaller, though still powerful, way—that is what love is about! Remind yourself to love often and well with this Love Mug featuring the powerful Biblical phrase: “The greatest of these is Love.” Order your mug today from The Catholic Company and begin each day with love and coffee!