



## *Perspective/Opinion*

# **St Valentine's Day: A Gory beginning to a Romantic Evening**

By Julia Bosco

St. Valentine's Day isn't rooted in red, pink, and white hearts, candy, flowers, and romantic cards. Its roots are in remembrance of a Roman Catholic priest and physician, who was executed almost two centuries ago because of his faith. Parchment hearts were his coded gift to couples he married secretly.

Throughout the Roman empire, Christians were persecuted for their faith. They were hunted and punished for their beliefs at odds with the government, for which the penalty was death. In the third century, the death penalty was carried out in public in grotesque, prolonged, and painful ways to make an example of the severity of the offense, often following extended imprisonment. This was the case with St. Valentine's. He was arrested and condemned to death by Emperor Claudius II, the Goth, for practicing his Catholic faith and ministry of the sacraments, including marriage. He was imprisoned for many months awaiting his sentence, death by being beaten with clubs, but when these methods failed, he was beheaded on February 14th, 270 AD.

His penalty was for the "heinous crime" of living out his Catholic faith and performing the sacraments that his faith dictated, including marriage.

Many details and specifics about life of St. Valentine have been lost throughout the ages, but the surviving accounts do elucidate the origin of today's romantic valentine. The origin of exchanging detailed heart-shaped notes comes from St. Valentine's ministry. As a wedding gift to the couple, St. Valentine crafted intricate hearts cut from parchment so that they would have a physical and secret, and concealable reminder of their vows to each other and to God.



The first official, St. Valentine's Day, was celebrated in 496 AD, which enshrined the tradition of exchanging love messages written on handmade, elaborately decorated cut-out hearts started by St. Valentine.

Growing up in the 21st century, this tradition has a mystical weight that inspires me today. St. Valentine's dedication and selfless acts show admirable character traits that I continue to cultivate in myself. Although I will partake in sending my fiancé a Valentine this year, I will also

spend time self-examining St. Valentine and his refusal to surrender his faith even at the expense of his life. Do I have faith that I would die for?

For additional reading:

<https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/catholic-contributions/history-of-st-valentine.html>

<https://catholicsaintmedals.com/saints/st-valentine/>

<https://www.rosesonly.com.au/st-valentine>

Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "St. Valentine". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 5 Jan. 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Valentine>. Accessed 18 January 2023.

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