

FEBRUARY - 2018

† All You Need is Love . . . His Love! †

Valentine's Day is celebrated as . . . a day of *love*. Boys buy girls flowers and candy -- take them to nice restaurants -- a cute card might even be involved -- or, if you really want to go big -- a generous gift is given [gasp!] . . . but why?

In the Third Century (200's!) there was an emperor named Claudius. He said soldiers could not get married. Why? He believed a single soldier was an undivided soldier. Church tradition says that a Roman Priest named Valentine started performing secret weddings for these soldiers -- undercover marriages! He was eventually arrested and sentenced to death. February 14th is the day the Church believes Saint Valentine literally 'lost his head' so . . . Valentine's Day!

In this month of February, with this day of 'love' -- you will probably say sometime to someone:

"I love you".

"I love you" is an incomplete sentence. There is usually a "because" or "until" or "if" or "but" that follows the "I love you."

"I love you...because you make me happy." "I love you...but I also love -- more." "I love you...until you are mean to me."

"I love you...if you love me."

We love because we discover in the 'them' something that is lovable. We see, we know, and then we love. Or, at least, we promise to love.

Not so with God! *God is the only one for whom, "I love you," is a complete sentence.* He loves first, without finding anything worthy of love in us. He does not seek the lovable, the likable, or the one who will love Him back. Even before He created you, from the very foundation of the world, He loved you! Indeed, His love created you, formed you in your mother's womb, re-created you in the womb of the Church, and continues to love you even when you are mean, nasty, and unkind.

God loves you because God is love.

He does what He is.

For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—

but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners,

Christ died for us.

Romans 5:7-8

He takes you -- the most unlovable of people -- and before you clean up your act or show signs of repentance or before anything -- God loves you!

He loves you in the most real, true, down to earth, always their kind of love -- Jesus! He is love made flesh for you, for your flesh and blood life!

God is the only one who can say, "I love you," and no more. He speaks truth, the full truth, and in that full truth you receive the full love of God in Christ!

Saint Valentine died on February 14th for performing outlawed weddings. Jesus died on a Friday to make outlaws into His beloved! That love of God in Jesus transforms us outlaws beyond anyone's wildest dreams into His lovely people!

The peace of the Lord be with you!

Pastor Bert