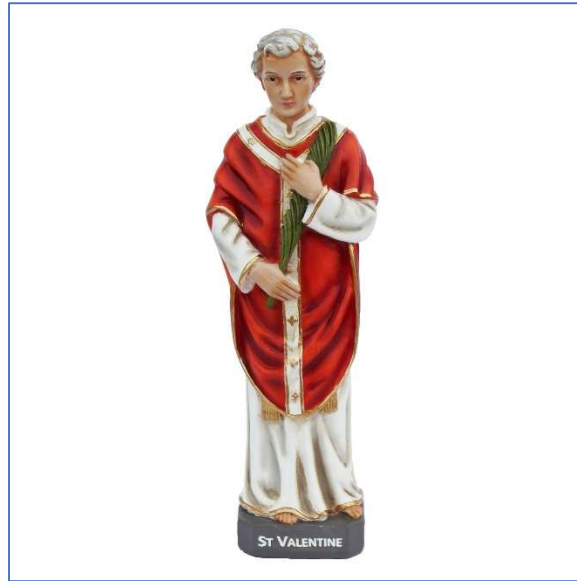


February - St. Valentine



There are two stories of Saint Valentine, for February 14.

One is of the priest and martyr who lived around AD 270. Despite persecutions he was well known for his sanctity and Faith. The Emperor Claudius Caesar invited him to the palace to befriend him but requested Valentine to adore his gods.

Valentine refused, but cured a nobleman's blind daughter, and converted the nobleman and his family. Enraged, Claudius condemned Valentine to be beheaded on the Via Flaminia in Rome. He was buried nearby, and a church was built in his honour.

The other St. Valentine is Bishop of Terni, Italy, 70 years later. He was invited by Philosopher Crato to heal his son from a severe deformity. He promised Valentine half his possessions. Valentine told him his possessions were useless and instead prayed for the boy. The boy was cured.

Moved by the miracle Crato's whole family was baptized, including the son of the Prefect of Rome, Placidus. So furious and devastated was Placidus, that he ordered Valentine to be arrested and decapitated. He was severely beaten they secretly dragged him out of prison at midnight and beheaded on the Via Flaminia and was buried in Terri.

The two stories certainly show that this was one and the same person, whose heroic testimony of faith and healing and martyrdom.

The Benedictine Order spread the cult of St. Valentine's Day in their monasteries in France and England as they maintained the Church of St. Valentine in Terri.

It was Geoffrey Chaucer, the English writer, who in a text began the tradition of connecting Valentine to lovers. St Valentine is sometimes depicted as holding the sun in his hand, as February is the month, we awaken from winter lethargy and birds start mating.