

The Legend of St. Valentine

By Erin Horner

Each Valentine's Day many people hand out cards with kind words like "Be my Valentine" or "You're a great friend." Why do we do this? We can thank St. Valentine for this annual tradition.

Much of St. Valentine's life is a mystery. We know that he was a Christian priest. We also know that he lived in Rome in the third century. The rest of Valentine's story is a legend.

Valentine lived in Rome during the reign of Claudius II. Claudius II was not a kind ruler. He would throw people in jail if they did not worship Roman gods. He was especially cruel to Christians. Legend has it that Valentine liked to cheer up jailed Christians. He would send them heart-shaped cards.

Claudius was also cruel to some of the Roman soldiers. He insisted on their total devotion. That left them no time for love. Claudius issued an edict stating that soldiers could not get married. It is believed that this rule upset Valentine. He thought that a soldier should be able to serve his country *and* be married. Valentine disobeyed the ruler's orders. He began performing secret wedding ceremonies for young soldiers and their sweethearts.

When Claudius heard about these secret ceremonies, he was livid! He had Valentine jailed. Claudius wanted Valentine to stop marrying soldiers. The ruler also wanted him to renounce his god and begin worshiping Roman gods. Valentine kindly told Claudius that he would not worship Roman gods. His kind words impressed the leader, but they did not change Valentine's fate. It is believed the emperor had him killed on February 14.

Now each year on February 14, we encourage our friends and people that we love. We send cards, eat heart-shaped candy, and exchange small gifts. We treat each other kindly, just as St. Valentine did so many years ago.



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Questions

- _____ 1. Which sentence from the above passage contains context clues that help the reader to know what the word *edict* means?
- A. It is believed that this rule upset Valentine.
 - B. We treat each other kindly, just as St. Valentine did so many years ago.
 - C. He had Valentine jailed.
 - D. His kind words impressed the leader, but did not change Valentine's fate.
- _____ 2. The author probably wrote this article to _____.
- A. demonstrate how to make the perfect valentine
 - B. inform you about the legend of St. Valentine
 - C. persuade you to celebrate Valentine's Day
 - D. entertain you with Valentine party games

