



The Legend of Saint Valentine



The story of Valentine's Day begins in the third century with an oppressive Roman emperor and a humble Christian martyr. The emperor was Claudius II Gothicus. The Christian was Valentinus.

Claudius had ordered all Romans to worship state religion's idols, and he had made it a crime punishable by death to associate with Christians. But Valentinus was dedicated to the ideals of Christ, and not even the threat of death could keep him from practicing his beliefs.

During the last weeks of Valentinus's life a remarkable thing happened. One day a jailer for the Emperor of Rome knocked at Valentinus's door clutching his blind daughter in his arms. He had learned of Valentinus's medical and spiritual healing abilities, and appealed to Valentinus to treat his daughter's blindness. She had been blind since birth. Valentinus knew that her condition would be difficult to treat but he gave the man his word he would do his best. The little girl was examined, given an ointment for her eyes and a series of re-visits were scheduled.

Seeing that he was a man of learning, the jailer asked whether his daughter, Julia, might also be brought to Valentinus for lessons. Julia was a pretty young girl with a quick mind. Valentinus read stories of Rome's history to her. He described the world of nature to her. He taught her arithmetic and told her about GOD. She saw the world through his eyes, trusted in his wisdom, and found comfort in his quiet strength.

"Valentinus, does GOD really hear our prayers?" Julia said one day. "Yes, my child, He hears each one," he replied.

"Do you know what I pray for every morning and every night? I pray that I might see. I want so much to see everything you've told me about!"

"GOD does what is best for us if we will believe in HIM," Valentinus said.

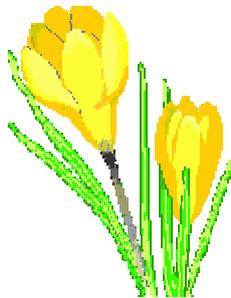
"Oh, Valentinus, I do believe," Julia said intensely. "I do." She knelt and grasped his hand. They sat quietly together, each praying.

Several weeks passed and the girl's sight was not restored. Yet the man and his daughter never wavered in their faith and returned each week.

Then one day, Valentinus received a visit from Roman soldiers who arrested him, destroyed his medicines and admonished him for his religious beliefs. When the little girl's father learned of his arrest and imprisonment, he wanted to intervene but there was nothing he could do.

On the eve of his death, Valentinus wrote a last note to Julia - knowing his execution was imminent. Valentinus asked the jailer for a paper, pen and ink. He quickly jotted a farewell note and handed it to the jailer to give to his blind daughter. He urged her to stay close to GOD, and he signed it "From Your Valentine." His sentence was carried out the next day, February 14, 270 A.D., near a gate that was later named Porta Valentini in his memory.

When the jailer went home, he was greeted by his little girl. The little girl opened the note and discovered a yellow crocus inside. The message said, "From your Valentine." As the little girl looked down upon the crocus that spilled into her palm she saw brilliant colors for the first time in her life! The girl's eyesight was restored! A miracle!



He was buried at what is now the Church of Praxedes in Rome. It is said that Julia herself planted a pink-blossomed almond tree near his grave. Today, the almond tree remains a symbol of abiding love and friendship. In 496 Pope Gelasius I named February 14 as Saint Valentine's Day. On each Valentine's Day, messages of affection, love and devotion are still exchanged around the world.

Happy Valentine's Day!

