

"I HEART YOU!"

"Beloved, let us love one another." 1 John 4:7

Okay, guys. Don't forget to give your Sweetie a gift this month. Why, you ask? Valentine's Day, of course! One doesn't want to get on the bad side of one's Sweetheart because we missed a commercialized, "Hallmark Moment" holiday to express our love and devotion. After all, "If Mama, ain't happy, ain't nobody happy!"

But, where did the tradition of Valentine's Day come from? Was it a women's conspiracy to make guys give them flowers and chocolate? Well, guys, if a woman needs to conspire to get you to show her some affection now and then, then you have a much bigger problem than a card can solve.

Was it a ploy by evil, Big Business to rake in the bucks for another contrived holiday? Probably. But so what? Valentine's Day is still a good time to consciously take time to express our love for those close to us.

What's surprising to many is that the origin of the Valentine Tradition has a real person behind it, much like the tradition of Santa Claus giving presents has a real person behind that, as well. They're just lost among the secular, commercialized elements we now know.

As general tradition has it, St. Valentine was a priest who was martyred under Emperor Claudius II in 269 A.D. The reason for his martyrdom was that, contrary to Roman law forbidding the marriage of young soldiers (because an unmarried soldier has more "energy" to fight), Valentine secretly supported, and married young couples (including soldiers), and also was instrumental in their conversion to Christianity. He would visit imprisoned Christians about to face martyrdom in the coliseum and would slip them, (again, as legend has it) a heart shaped note of encouragement and assurance of God's love for them. He was arrested, and though Claudius actually liked Valentine, when Valentine tried to convert him to Christianity, that was the last straw.

So the priest that worked to encourage love and marriage, and was willing to risk his life in that cause, was martyred on February 14th. Down through the ages, the legend morphed into the secular observance we have today with the symbol of hearts, cherubs with arrows, flowers and candy, etc.

However much of the legend is true, the underlying sentiment is most certainly true: "Beloved, let us love one another. For love is of God."

Happy Valentine's Day!