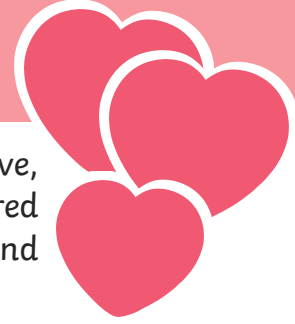


# Valentine's Day



Valentine's Day is an event associated with acts of love, devotion and gift giving. The celebration is also often referred to as St. Valentine's Day or the Feast of Saint Valentine and it is marked annually on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February.

## The Real Saint Valentine

There have been many significant Christian people named Valentine or Valentinus throughout history, including three who the Catholic Church officially recognise as **saints**. Due to this, there is often debate surrounding the exact person that Valentine's Day is named after. The figure who is most commonly associated with Valentine's Day (and to whom most people are referring when they use the name Saint Valentine) is a Christian priest who lived in Rome during the third century AD.

Very few facts about the life of Saint Valentine can be checked; however, it is widely believed that he lived during the reign of the Roman emperor, Claudius II. It is reported that Emperor Claudius II wanted to assemble a powerful army and he thought that Roman soldiers performed their duties more effectively when they were unmarried. He also thought that married soldiers were less efficient, weaker and more merciful than their unmarried counterparts so the Emperor is said to have passed a new law; the law strictly prohibited members of the Roman army from marrying.

Saint Valentine did not support Emperor Claudius's new law; instead, he helped Roman soldiers to marry in secret if they wished to do so. Before long, Saint Valentine's secret actions were uncovered. When he was told to stop, Saint Valentine refused so the Emperor ordered for him to be imprisoned.



## 'Your Valentine'

It is also said that Saint Valentine became close to a woman named Julia – the daughter of Asterius, who had jailed Saint Valentine on behalf of the Emperor. It was reported that Asterius had questioned Saint Valentine's faith and provoked him by saying that he would convert to Christianity if Saint

Valentine could heal Julia's eyesight. Saint Valentine is said to have placed his hands over Julia's eyes, recited a prayer and restored Julia's vision.

The legend says that Saint Valentine then wrote a letter to Julia and that, at the end of this letter, he signed off by writing 'your Valentine'. Some people believe that this is how the idea of sending romantic letters from 'your Valentine' began but many scholars think that this account of events has been heavily exaggerated.

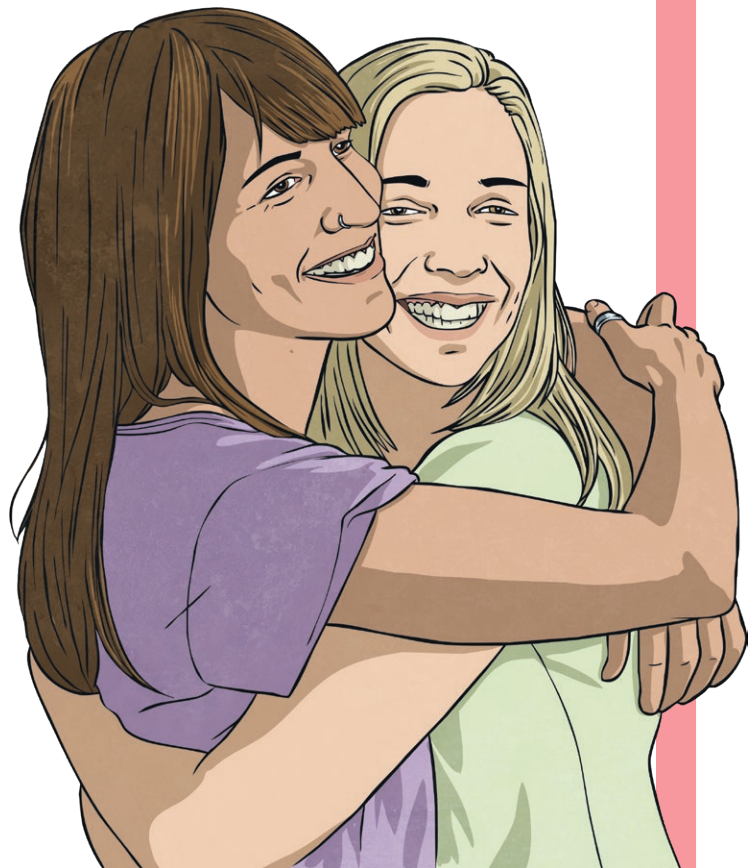


### St. Valentine's Day

In AD 496, Pope Gelasius created the Feast of Saint Valentine in honour of the influential Christian. The date for this event was set as the 14<sup>th</sup> of February as this is believed to mark the date that Saint Valentine died in AD 269. Although the Feast of Saint Valentine is generally still celebrated on this date, it wasn't until the 1500s that the 14<sup>th</sup> of February became associated with love notes and the act of gift giving is only believed to have begun hundreds of years after this. At first, couples would express their affection for one another through the giving of flowers, confectionery and cards, which became known as valentines. This is a tradition that we still observe today. It is estimated that people in the UK spent £855 million celebrating Valentine's Day in 2020!

### Glossary

**saints:** People who are acknowledged as holy or virtuous and who are highly regarded in the Christian faith. Saints are often prayed to for specific types of help.



# Questions

1. **Valentine's Day is an event associated with acts of love, devotion and gift giving.**

Which of the following is a synonym of the word 'devotion'? Tick one.

- ☐ loyalty  
☐ romance  
☐ distrust  
☐ enthusiasm

2. Who was Asterius? Tick one.

- ☐ an emperor of ancient Rome  
☐ the daughter of a jailor  
☐ the person who jailed Saint Valentine  
☐ a pope

3. **Due to this, there is often debate surrounding the exact person that Valentine's Day is named after.**

How else could the author have written the phrase 'there is often debate' in this sentence?

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4. Look at the section called **The Real Saint Valentine**.

Find and copy one word from this section that means 'put together'.

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5. What did Saint Valentine sign off his letters by writing?

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6. **Very few facts about the life of Saint Valentine can be checked...**

Why do you think that this is?

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7. Explain why you think that Saint Valentine did not support Emperor Claudius's new law.

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8. Comment on how the events of the 14<sup>th</sup> of February have changed over the past 1,000 years.

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9. How do you think the celebration of Valentine's Day will change in the future?

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