

Saint Valentine

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Saint Valentine (in Latin, **Valentinus**) is the name of several martyred saints of ancient Rome. The name "Valentine", derived from *valens* (worthy), was popular in Late Antiquity.^[2] Of the Saint Valentine whose feast is on February 14, nothing is known except his name and that he was buried at the Via Flaminia north of Rome on February 14. It is even uncertain whether the feast of that day celebrates only one saint or more saints of the same name. For this reason this liturgical commemoration was not kept in the Catholic calendar of saints for universal liturgical veneration as revised in 1969.^[3] But "Martyr Valentinus the Presbyter and those with him at Rome" remains in the list of saints proposed for veneration by all Catholics.^[4]

In the Eastern Orthodox Church, Saint Valentine the Presbyter is celebrated on July 6,^[5] and Hieromartyr Saint Valentine (Bishop of Interamna, Terni in Italy) is celebrated on July 30.^[6]

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Who was Valentine?

The name "Valentine" (Priest Valentio) does not occur in the earliest list of Roman martyrs, compiled by the Chronographer of 354. The feast of St.

Valentine was first established in 496 by Pope Gelasius I, who included Valentine among those "... whose names are justly revered among men, but whose acts are known only to God." As Gelasius implied, nothing was known, even then, about the lives of any of these martyrs. The Saint Valentine that appears in various martyrologies in connection with February 14 is described either as:

- A priest in Rome,
- A bishop of Interamna (modern Terni), or
- A martyr in the Roman province of Africa.^[7]

Saint Valentine



Saint Valentine baptizing Saint Lucilla by Jacopo Bassano

Bishop and Martyr

Died traditionally ca. 269^[1] but see text

Venerated Roman Catholic Church

in Eastern Orthodox Church

Anglican Communion

Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

Feast February 14 (Roman Catholic Church)

July 30 (Eastern Orthodox Church)

Attributes birds; roses; bishop with a crippled or epileptic child at his feet; bishop with a rooster nearby; bishop refusing to adore an idol; bishop being beheaded; priest bearing a sword; priest holding a sun; priest giving sight to a blind girl^[1]

Patronage affianced couples, against fainting, bee keepers, happy marriages, love, plague, epileptics^[1]

The first representation of Saint Valentine appeared in the *Nuremberg Chronicle*, (1493); alongside the woodcut portrait of Valentine the text states that he was a Roman priest martyred during the reign of Claudius II, known as Claudius Gothicus. He was arrested and imprisoned upon being caught marrying Christian couples and otherwise aiding Christians who were at the time being persecuted by Claudius in Rome. Helping Christians at this time was considered a crime. Claudius took a liking to this prisoner -- until Valentinus tried to convert the Emperor -- whereupon this priest was condemned to death. He was beaten with clubs and stoned; when that didn't finish him, he was beheaded outside the Flaminian Gate. Various dates are given for the martyrdom or martyrdoms: 269, 270, or 273.^[8]

The official Roman Martyrology for February 14 mentions only one Saint Valentine.



Saint Valentine of Terni oversees the construction of his basilica at Terni, from a 14th century French manuscript (BN, Mss fr. 185)

English eighteenth-century antiquarians Alban Butler and Francis Douce, noting the obscurity of Saint Valentine's identity, suggested that Valentine's Day was created as an attempt to supersede the pagan holiday of Lupercalia. This idea has lately been contested by Professor Jack Oruch of the University of Kansas. Many of the current legends that characterise Saint Valentine were invented in the fourteenth century in England, notably by Geoffrey Chaucer and his circle, when the feast day of February 14 first became associated with romantic love.^[9]

While a website

(<http://www.orthodoxengland.btinternet.co.uk/saintsv.htm>) of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia and other sources give different lists of Saint Valentines, the Catholic Church's official list of recognized saints, the Roman Martyrology lists seven: a martyr

(Roman priest or Terni bishop?) buried on the Via Flaminia (February 14); a priest from Viterbo (November 3); a bishop from Raetia who died in about 450 (January 7); a fifth-century priest and hermit (July 4); a Spanish hermit who died in about 715 (October 25); Valentine Berrio Ochoa, martyred in 1861 (November 24); and Valentine Jaunzarás Gómez, martyred in 1936 (September 18).^[10]

Earliest church dedications

Hagiographical sources speak of a Roman priest and a bishop of Terni each buried along the Via Flaminia outside Rome, at different distances from the city, with each venerated on February 14.^[11] In the Middle Ages, two Roman churches were dedicated to Saint Valentine. One was the tenth-century church *Sancti Valentini de Balneo Miccine* or *de Piscina*, which was rededicated by Pope Urban III in 1186. The other, on the Via Flaminia, was the ancient basilica *S. Valentini extra Portam* founded by Pope Julius I (337–352), though not under this dedication.^[12] The basilica *appellatur Valentini*, "is called Valentine's"; but early basilicas were as often called by the name of their former owner as by the saint to whom they were dedicated: see *titulus*.

This, the earlier and by far more important of the churches, is dedicated to the less prominent of the two saints, Valentine, presbyter of Rome;

^[13] this was the *Basilica S. Valentini extra Portam*, the "Basilica of Saint Valentine beyond the Gate" which was situated beyond the *Porta Flaminia* (the Porta del Popolo, which was the *Porta S. Valentini* when William of Malmesbury visited Rome). It stood on the right hand side at the second milestone on the Via Flaminia.^[14] It had its origins in a funerary chapel on the site of catacombs, which the *Liber Pontificalis* attributes to a foundation by Pope Julius I (337–352). However, the dedications of two basilicas dedicated by *Julius* are not specified in the *Liber Pontificalis*. It was restored or largely rebuilt by Pope Theodore (642–649) and Pope Leo III (795–816), enriched with an



Saint Valentine receives a rosary from the Virgin, by David Teniers III

altar cloth by Pope Benedict II (683–685) and by gifts of Pope Hadrian I (772–795), Pope Leo III and Pope Gregory IV (827–844), so *that* it had become *ecclesia mirifice ornata*, "a church marvellously adorned". The monastery of San Silvestro in Capite was annexed to it, and in the surviving epitome of a lost catalogue of the churches of Rome, compiled by Giraldus Cambrensis about 1200, it was *hospitale S. Valentini extra urbem*, the "hospital of Saint Valentine outside the city". But in the thirteenth century the martyr's relics were transferred to Santa Prassede, and the ancient basilica decayed: in Signorili's catalogue, made in about 1425, it was *Ecclesia sancti Valentini extra portam sine muris non habet sacerdotem*, "the church of Saint Valentine beyond the gate without [enclosing] walls, has no priest".^[15]

In the *Golden Legend*

The *Legenda Aurea* of Jacobus de Voragine, compiled about 1260 and one of the most-read books of the High Middle Ages, gives sufficient details of the saints for each day of the liturgical year to inspire a homily on each occasion. The very brief *vita* of St Valentine has him refusing to deny Christ before the "Emperor Claudius"^[16] in the year 280. Before his head was cut off, this Valentine restored sight and hearing to the daughter of his jailer. Jacobus makes a play with the etymology of "Valentine", "as containing valour".

St. Valentine's Day

For more details on this topic, see Valentine's Day.

Historian Jack Oruch has made the case that the traditions associated with "Valentine's Day", documented in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowles* and set in the fictional context of an old tradition, had no such tradition before Chaucer.^[17] He argues that the speculative explanation of sentimental customs, posing as historical fact, had their origins among 18th-century antiquaries, notably Alban Butler, the author of *Butler's Lives of Saints*, and have been perpetuated even by respectable modern scholars. In the French 14th-century manuscript illumination from a *Vies des Saints* (*illustration above*), Saint Valentine, bishop of Terni, oversees the construction of his basilica at Terni; there is no suggestion here yet that the bishop was a patron of lovers.^[18]

Relics and liturgical celebration

The flower crowned skull (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mymuk/4309792444>) of St Valentine is exhibited in the Basilica of Santa Maria in Cosmedin, Rome.

In 1836, some relics that were exhumed from the catacombs of Saint Hippolytus on the Via Tiburtina, then near (rather than inside) Rome, were identified with St Valentine; placed in a casket, and transported to the Whitefriar Street Carmelite Church in Dublin, Ireland, to which they were donated by Pope Gregory XVI. Many tourists visit the saintly remains on St. Valentine's Day, when the casket is carried in solemn procession to the high altar for a special Mass dedicated to young people and all those in love. Alleged relics of St. Valentine also lie at the reliquary of Roquemaure in France, in the Stephansdom in Vienna and also in Blessed John Duns Scotus' church in the Gorbals area of Glasgow, Scotland. There is also a gold reliquary bearing the words 'Corpus St. Valentin, M' (Body of St. Valentine, Martyr) at The Birmingham Oratory, UK in one of the side altars in the main church.

Of greatest interest at this altar is the rich coffin which lies beneath it, containing the body of St. Valentine, a martyr whose relics from the Roman catacombs were given to John Henry Cardinal Newman by Blessed Pius IX in 1847.^[19]

The Saint Valentine who is celebrated on February 14 remains in the Catholic Church's official list of saints (the Roman Martyrology), but, in view of the scarcity of information about him, his commemoration was removed from the General Calendar for universal liturgical veneration, when this was revised in 1969. It is included in local calendars of places such as Balzan and Malta, where relics of the saint are claimed to be found. Some still observe the calendars of the Roman Rite from the

Tridentine Calendar until 1969, in which Saint Valentine was at first celebrated as a simple feast, until 1955, when Pope Pius XII reduced the mention of Saint Valentine to a commemoration in the Mass of the day. It is kept as a commemoration by Traditionalist Roman Catholics who, in accordance with the authorization given by Pope Benedict XVI's *motu proprio Summorum Pontificum* of July 7, 2007, use the General Roman Calendar of 1962 and the liturgy of Pope John XXIII's 1962 edition of the Roman Missal, and, as a *Simple Feast*, by Traditionalist Roman Catholics who use the General Roman Calendar as in 1954.

The feast day of Saint Valentine, priest and martyr, was included in the Tridentine Calendar, with the rank of Simple, on February 14. In 1955, Pope Pius XII reduced the celebration to a commemoration within the celebration of the occurring weekday. In 1969, this commemoration was removed from the General Roman Calendar, but Saint Valentine continues to be recognized as a saint, since he is included in the Roman Martyrology, the Catholic Church's official list of saints. The feast day of Saint Valentine also continues to be included in local calendars of places such as Balzan and Malta, where relics of the saint are claimed to be found.

See also

- La Fête du Baiser
- Saint Valentine, 8th century Spanish martyr

Notes

1. ^a ^b ^c Jones, Terry. "Valentine of Rome" (<http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/saintv06.htm>) . *Patron Saints Tom*. <http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/saintv06.htm>. Retrieved 2007-02-14.
2. [^] *IOL* (http://www.iol.co.za/general/newsview.php?art_id=qw981696180625B241&click_id=1890&set_id=1) , article dated February 09, 2001
3. [^] *Calendarium Romanum* (Libreria Editrice Vatican, 1969), p. 117
4. [^] *Martyrologium Romanum* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2001 ISBN 88-209-7210-7), February 14
5. [^] Martyr Valentinus the Presbyter and those with him at Rome (<http://ocafs.oca.org/FeastSaintsLife.asp?FSID=101926>) - Orthodox Church in America website
6. [^] Hieromartyr Valentine the Bishop of Interamna, Terni in Italy (<http://ocafs.oca.org/FeastSaintsLife.asp?FSID=102148>) - Orthodox Church in America website
7. [^] Catholic Encyclopedia: St. Valentine (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15254a.htm>)
8. [^] Jack Oruch, "St. Valentine, Chaucer, and Spring in February", *Speculum* **56.3** (July 1981 pp 534-565) p 535.
9. [^] Jack Oruch identified the inception of this possible connection in Butler's *Lives of the... Saints*, 1756, and Douce's *Illustrations of Shakespeare, and of Ancient Manner*. See Oruch, "St. Valentine, Chaucer, and Spring in February", *Speculum* **56.3** (July 1981 pp 534-565).
10. [^] *Martyrologium Romanum* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2001, ISBN 88-209-7210-7), *Index*, p. 768)
11. [^] René Aigrain, *Hagiographie: Ses sources, ses méthodes, son histoire*, (Paris 1953, pp 268-69; Agostino S. Amore, "S. Valentino di Roma o di Terni?", *Antoniano* **41**.(1966), pp 260-77.
12. [^] Christian Hülsen, *Chiese di Roma nel Medio Evo* (Florence: Olschki, (On-line text (http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/I/Gazetteer/Places/Europe/Italy/Lazio/Roma/Rome/churches/_Texts/Hu))
13. [^] He figures only in the account of the martyrdom of Marius and Martha and their company, *Passio SS. Marii, Marthae et socc.* §§ 6-10, 15. (University of Manchester (<http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/cla/projects/romanmartyrsproject/handlistp-z/>)).
14. [^] The later church also dedicated to a Valentine — the more prominent bishop of Terni, the only Valentine mentioned in *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*— was further along, at milestone 64 (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1911 (<http://www.1911encyclopedia.org/Valentine>) ; Handlist of Roman martyrs (<http://www.art.man.ac.uk/cla/handlist1.htm>)).
15. [^] Christian Hülsen, *Le Chiese di Roma nel Medio Evo* (Florence: Olschki) 1927.(on-line text (http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/I/Gazetteer/Places/Europe/Italy/Lazio/Roma/Rome/churches/_Texts/Hu))
16. [^] Under the circumstances, the "Emperor Claudius" was a detail meant to enhance verisimilitude. Attempts to identify him with the only third-century Claudius, Claudius Gothicus, who spent his brief reign (268-270) away from Rome winning his cognomen, are illusions in pursuit of a literary phantom: "No evidence outside several late saints' legends suggests that Claudius II reversed the policy of toleration established by the policy of his predecessor Gallienus", Jack Oruch states, in "St. Valentine, Chaucer, and Spring in February", *Speculum* **56.3** (July 1981),p 536, referencing William H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (New York, 1967, p 326.

17. ^ Oruch 1981:534-565.
18. ^ BN, Mss fr. 185. The book of *Lives of the Saints*, with illuminations by Richard de Montbaston and collaborators, was among the manuscripts that Cardinal Richelieu bequeathed to the King of France (Further illuminations can be found on-line (<http://gallica.bnf.fr/Catalogue/noticesInd/MAN00866.htm>)).
19. ^ Birmingham Oratory Website (<http://homepage.eircom.net/~seanjmurphy/irhismys/valentine.htm>) : "Irish Historical Mysteries: St. Valentine in Dublin".

References

- *The Golden Legend: St. Valentine* (<http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/golden169.htm>)
- Catholic Encyclopedia: *St. Valentine* (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15254a.htm>)
- *In Search of St. Valentine* (<http://www.mirabilis.ca/archives/002639.html>)
- Oruch, Jack B. 1981. "St. Valentine, Chaucer, and Spring in February", *Speculum* **56.3** (July 1981), pp 534–565.

External links

- Valentine's Day: Love and Romance Through the Ages (<http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Valentin/English/index.php3>)
- La Saint-Valentin : L'amour et la tendresse à travers les âges (<http://www.museevirtuel.ca/Exhibitions/Valentin/Francais/index.php3>)

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