

## WHO WAS SAINT VALENTINE?

*By Juanita Sparks*

According to legend, at least two Roman priests were named Valentine. Both suffered the death of a martyr.

A martyr is a person who suffers persecution or death for a belief or principle that he or she holds dear. These convictions are usually contrary to popular trends. The priests, who were named Valentine, had converted to Christianity in the early third or fourth century A.D. This practice was frowned upon by the rulers of that period.

Valentine, a Christian priest performed marriages for the soldiers of Emperor Claudius' armies, although the emperor had forbidden his soldiers to marry.

St. Valentine was beheaded for his acts of kindness. As a result he achieved martyrdom.

It is believed that the date of his death was February 14.

Whether it was the death of St. Valentine or an ancient pagan belief that connected St. Valentine's Day with romance is a matter of speculation.

The ancient pagans believed that the middle of February is the time that the birds first mate. The pagans held a festival to mark this important time of the year.

Regardless of what we know or believe about St. Valentine we recognize that February 14 is a day named in his honor. St. Valentine's Day is a day set aside to be romantic, sentimental and show love to friends, family and acquaintances.

Happy Valentine's Day.