

## *Celebration of Love*

Today and Saturday, candy, flowers, gifts and cards will be exchanged between loved ones, all in the name of St. Valentine. Just who was this mysterious saint and why do we celebrate this holiday? It all has to do with love -- and why not set aside a special occasion for this important emotion?

Valentine's Day has its roots in several legends. One contends that Valentine was a priest who served during the third century in Rome. When Emperor Claudius II decided that single men made better soldiers than those with wives and families, he outlawed marriage for young men -- his crop of potential soldiers. Valentine, realizing the injustice of the decree, defied Claudius and continued to perform marriages for young lovers in secret. When Valentine's actions were discovered, Claudius ordered that he be put to death.

Other stories suggest that Valentine may have been killed for attempting to help Christians escape harsh Roman prisons where they were often beaten and tortured.

One legend has it that Valentine actually sent the first "valentine" greeting himself. While in prison, it is believed that Valentine fell in love with a young girl, who may have been his jailer's daughter, who visited him during his confinement. Before his death, it is alleged that he wrote her a letter, which he signed, "From your Valentine," an expression that will appear on many cards and notes attached to flowers and candy this weekend.

The celebration of romantic love is most appropriate. And for Life Care, American Lifestyles and Life Care at Home, the observance of love of another kind -- for the patients we serve and in the bond that draws caregivers together in pursuit of that mission -- is real and passionately pursued every day of the year.

--Beecher Hunter