

Saint Valentine is a widely recognized third-century Roman saint commemorated on February 14 and associated since the High Middle Ages with a tradition of courtly love.



In the *Golden Legend*

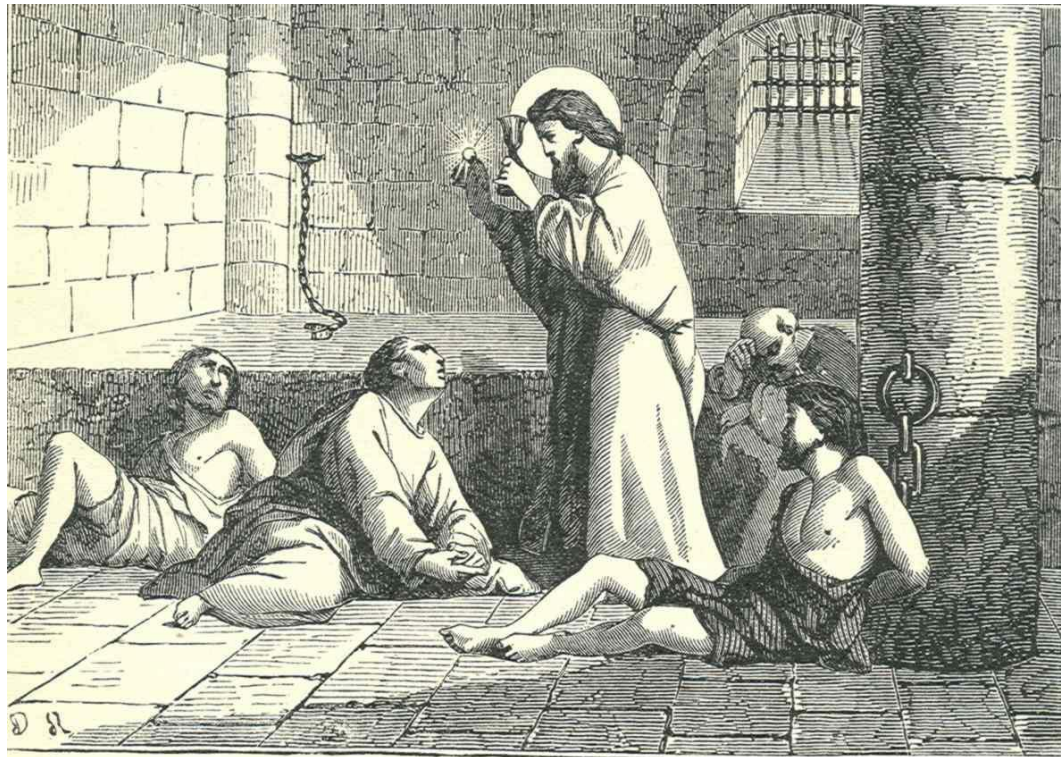


The *Legenda Aurea* of Jacobus de Voragine, compiled about 1260 and one of the most-read books of the High Middle Ages, gives sufficient details of the saints for each day of the liturgical year to inspire a homily on each occasion. The very brief *vita* of St Valentine has him refusing to deny Christ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



There are many other legends behind Saint Valentine. One is that in the 1st century AD it is said that Valentine, who was a priest, defied the order of the emperor Claudius and secretly married couples so that the husbands wouldn't have to go to war. Soldiers were sparse at this time so this was a big inconvenience to the emperor.

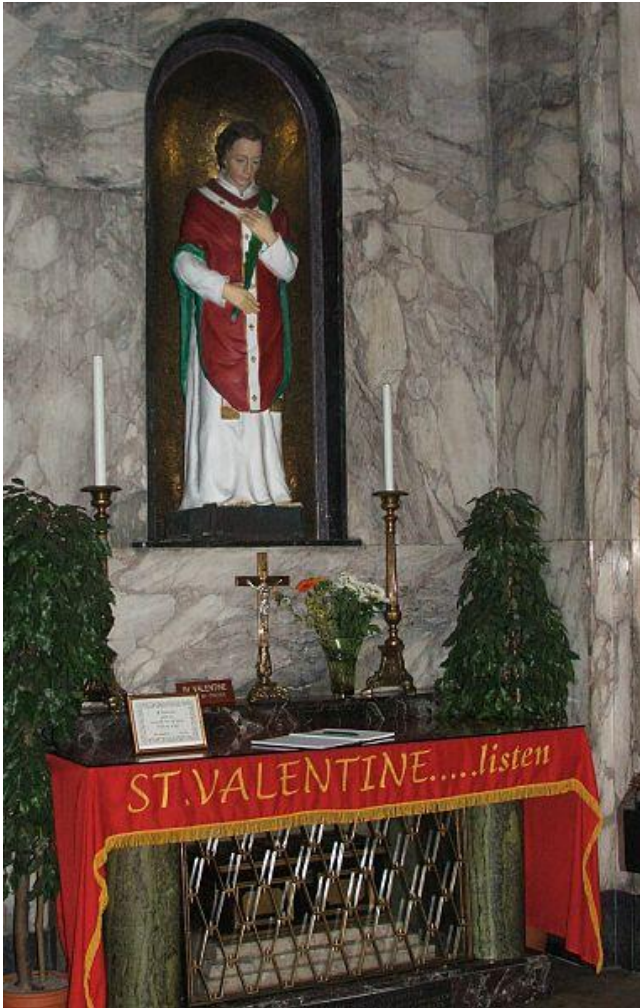
Another legend is that Valentine refused to sacrifice to pagan gods. Being imprisoned for this, Valentine gave his testimony in prison and through his prayers healed the jailer's daughter who was suffering from blindness. On the day of his execution he left her a note that was signed "Your Valentine."



Februalia, also **Februatio**, was the Roman festival of ritual purification. The festival, which is basically one of Spring washing or cleaning (associated also with the raininess of this time of year) is ancient, and possibly of Sabine origin. According to Ovid, *Februare* as a Latin word which refers to means of purification (particularly with washing or water) derives from an earlier Etruscan word referring to purging.



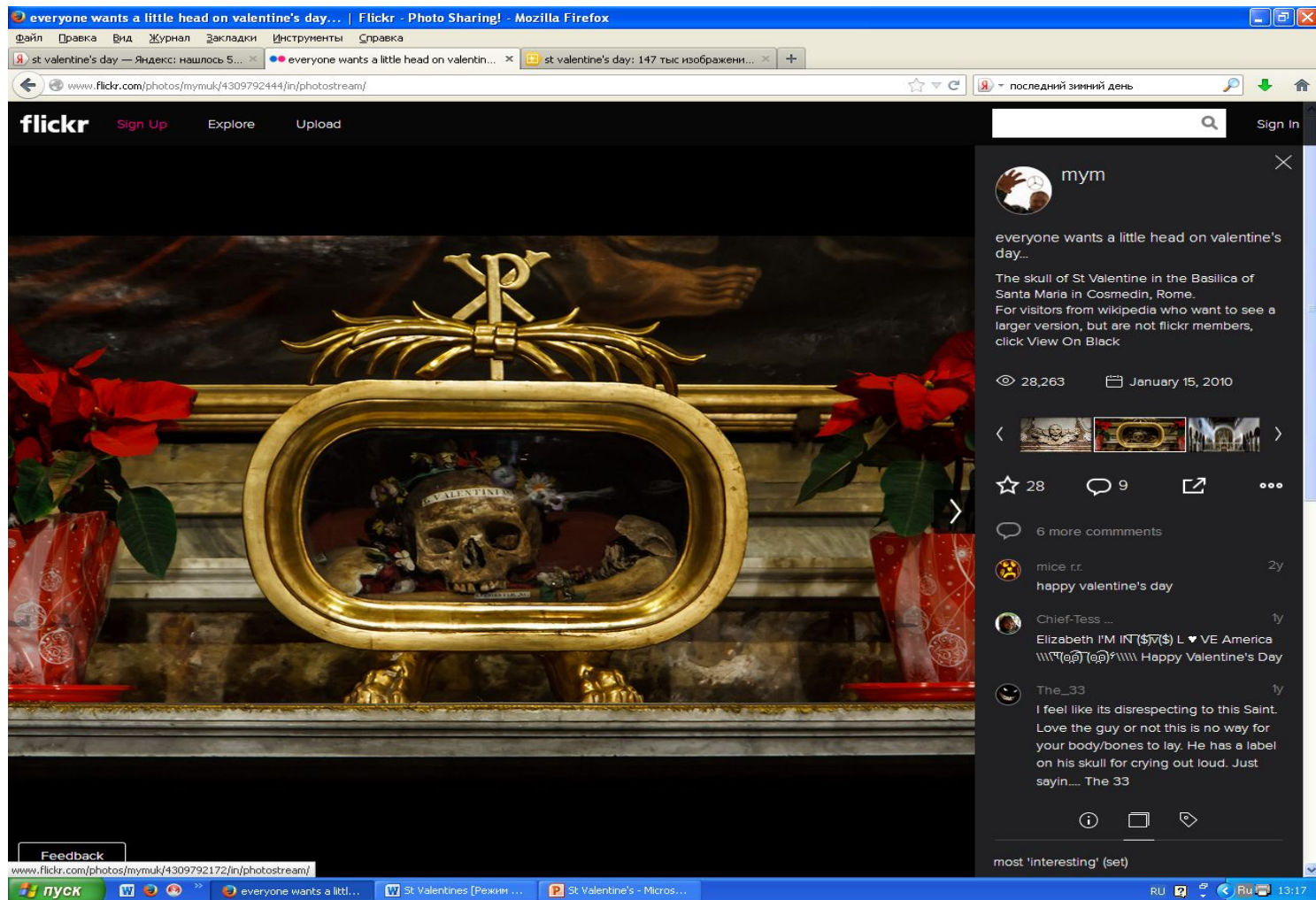
Lupercalia was a very ancient, possibly pre-Roman pastoral festival, observed on February 13 through 15 to avert evil spirits and purify the city, releasing health and fertility. **Lupercalia** subsumed **Februa**, an earlier-origin spring cleansing ritual held on the same date, which gives the month of February (*Februarius*) its name. The name *Lupercalia* was believed in antiquity to evince some connection with the Ancient Greek festival of the Arcadian Lykaia (from Ancient Greek: λύκος — *lukos*, "wolf", Latin *lupus*) and the worship of *Lycaean Pan*, assumed to be a Greek equivalent to **Faunus**, as instituted by **Evander**.



Oruch charges that the traditions associated with "Valentine's Day", documented in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Parliament of Foules* and set in the fictional context of an old tradition, did not exist before Chaucer. He argues that the speculative explanation of sentimental customs, posing as historical fact, had their origins among 18th-century antiquaries.

In the French 14th-century manuscript illumination from a *Vies des Saints*, Saint Valentine, bishop of Terni, oversees the construction of his basilica at Terni; there is no suggestion here that the bishop was a patron of lovers.

During the Middle Ages it was believed that birds paired couples in mid-February. This was then associated with the romance of Valentine.



**The flower-crowned skull of St. Valentine
is exhibited in the Basilica of Santa Maria in Cosmedin, Rome.**

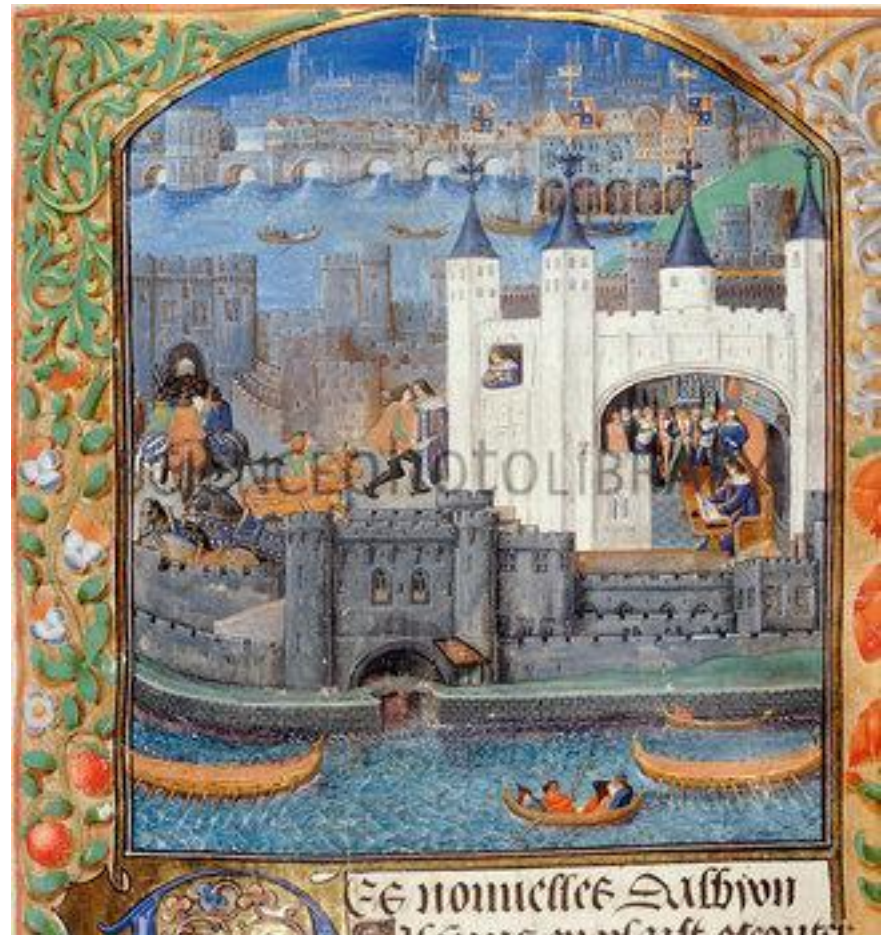
- The earliest Valentine's message to have survived is a short poem written by the Duke of Orleans to his wife in the 15th century. When it was written, the Duke of Orleans was in the Tower of London, a prisoner of the English following his role in the Battle of Agincourt.



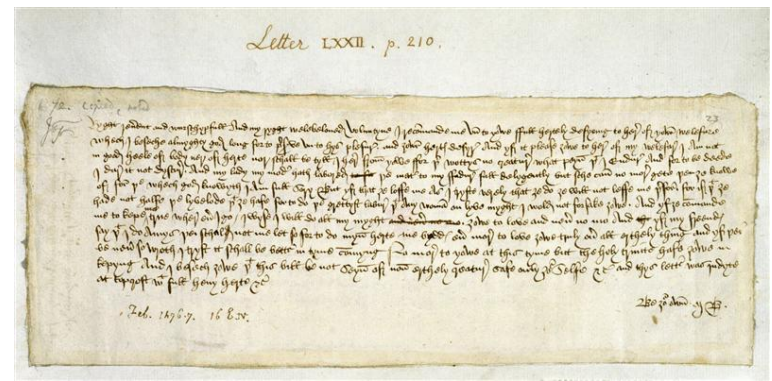
CHARLES DUKE OF ORLEANS.

(1391-1405)

Engraved by J. Smith 1845



In 1477 Margery Brewes wrote a Valentine's message to her husband-to-be, John Paston. The message has survived and it is part of the *Paston Letters*.



Ryght worschypfull and welebelovyd Volentyne, in my most umble wyse, I recommande me un to yowe, &c. And hertely I thanke yowe for the letter which that ye sende mebe John Bekarton, wherby I undyrstonde and knowe, that ye be purposyd to come to Topcroft in schorte tyme, and withowte any erand or mater, but only to hafe a conclusyon of themater betwyx my fader and yowe; I wolde be most glad of any creatur on lyve, so that the mater myght growe to effect. And ther as ye say, and ye come and fynde the mater no more towards yowe then ye dyd aforetime, ye wold no more put my fader and my lady my moder to no cost ner besenyssse, for that cause,, a good wyle aftur, wech causeth myne herte to be full hevvy; and yf that ye come, and the mater take to some effecte, then schuld I be meche mor sory and full of hevynesse.

And as for my selfe, I hafe done and undyrstond in the mater that I can or may, as Good knowyth; and I let yowe pleylnly undyrstond, that my fader will no more money parte with all in that behalfe, but an C *li*. And I. marke, which is ryght far fro the acomplyshment of yowr desyre.

Wherfore, yf that ye cowde be content with that good, and my por persone, I wold be the meryest mayden on grounde; and yf ye thynke not yowr selffe so satysfyed, or that ye hafe mech mor good, as I hafe undyrstonde be yowe afor; good, trewe, and lovyng volentyne, that ye take no such labor uppon yowe, as to come more fo that mater, but let it passe, and never more to be spokyn of, as I may be yowr trewe lover and bedewoman duryng my lyfe.

No more unto yowe at thys tyme, but, Almyghty Jesus preserve yowe, both body and sowle, &c.

Be your Volentyne,

MARGERY BREWS

William Shakespeare, the famous English playwright, mentions this belief in Hamlet (1603). Ophelia, a woman in the play, sings:

***Good morrow! 'Tis St.
Valentine's Day
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your
window,
To be your valentine!***



In 18th century England, people expressed their love on Valentine's Day by presenting their loved one with flowers, sweets, chocolates and Valentine's Day greeting cards (Valentines). Most Valentines were sent anonymously.

- By the 19th century, Valentines were produced in factories.**
- The first mass-produced Valentines in the United States were manufactured by Esther Howland in the late 1840s.**
- In the UK, more than £1 billion is spent on Valentine's Day and more than 20 million cards are sent.**

