



ECHO

10TH FEBRUARY 2022

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ECUMENICAL CHURCH OF OCCITANIE www.ourchurch.fr

WOULD THE REAL ST VALENTINE PLEASE STAND UP ?

There are two confusing things about this day of romance and anonymous love-cards strewn with lace, cupids and ribbon: firstly, there seems to have been two different Valentines in the 4th century - one a priest martyred on the Flaminian Way, under the emperor Claudius, the other a bishop of Terni martyred at Rome. And neither seems to have had any clear connection with lovers or courting couples.

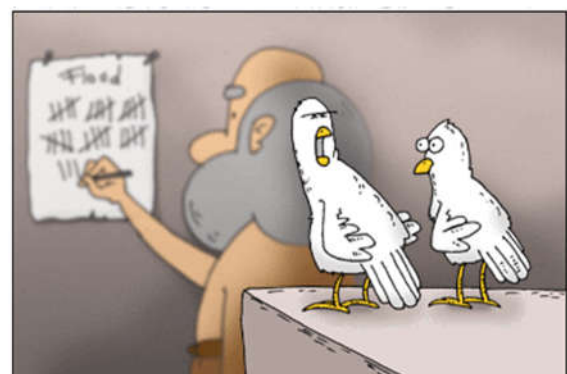
So why has Valentine become the patron saint of romantic love? By Chaucer's time the link was assumed to be because on these saints' day - 14th February - the birds are supposed to pair. Or perhaps the custom of seeking a partner on St Valentine's Day is a surviving scrap of the old Roman Lupercalia festival, which took place in the middle of February.

One of the Roman gods honoured during this Festival was Pan, the god of nature. Another was Juno, the goddess of women and marriage. During the Lupercalia it was a popular custom for young men to draw the name of a young unmarried woman from a name-box. The two would then be partners or 'sweethearts' during the time of the celebrations. Even modern Valentine decorations bear an ancient symbol of love - Roman cupids with their bows and love-arrows.

It seems to be the story of the young martyred priest which has entered our religious tradition. The Roman Emperor Claudius II needed soldiers. He suspected that marriage made men want to stay at home with their wives, instead of fighting wars, so he outlawed marriage.

A kind-hearted young priest named Valentine felt sorry for all the couples who wanted to marry, but who couldn't. So secretly he married as many couples as he could - until the Emperor found out and condemned him to death. While he was in prison awaiting execution, Valentine showed love and compassion to everyone around him, including his jailer. The jailer had a young daughter who was blind, but through Valentine's prayers, she was healed. Just before his death in Rome on 14th February, he wrote her a farewell message signed 'From your Valentine.'

There are no churches in England dedicated to Valentine, but since 1835 his relics have been claimed by the Carmelite church in Dublin.



OH NO, I FOUND THE LAND A WEEK AGO. I'M JUST ENJOYING HAVING IT ALL TO MYSELF FOR A WHILE.

ECO ONLINE LENT CONVERSATIONS

As an online worship community, we will be holding a series of online Lent Conversations on Zoom each week during Lent. These will be held for about an hour one afternoon each week, and will begin on the week beginning 4 March and will continue until the week beginning 4 April.

You don't need to come to all of these sessions as they are each independent of one another, and you are welcome just to come to listen. There will be some material available to download, free of charge, and look at before each session. We will put this on our website a few days in advance, and the Zoom details will be published in advance.

We are still finalising details of these sessions, including agreeing the day of the week and the time at which they will be held. We will announce these in the next couple of weeks in ECHO.



PERMANENT CHANGE IN DATE FOR NEW NAMES TO INCLUDE IN OUR PRAYERS FOR HEALING

In order to help the leaders of our Healing Services to prepare the recordings of the names that we include in our broadcasts, and for the studio team to finalise the video of the service, we are permanently moving the date by which we will ask you to send us new names of people whom you would like us to include in our prayers.

Would you please therefore send us the names of new people whom you would like us to include in our prayers by **Tuesday** evening of each week.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TONY



This appears to be the season of major birthday celebrations, and this week, we wish Tony Varty, husband of Janet Varty, a very Happy Birthday!

Church Mice

Karl Zorowski

