



The Cross and Crown

February 2019

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The Story Behind St. Valentine's Day

Oh, to be young, wealthy and in love – all in the third century! And to be a Christian! Such was young Valentine. He would consummate his great love for his lady love by taking her as his bride. Soon they would be wed.

But his pleasurable, orderly world came crashing down around him when the Roman emperor declared all Christians illegal citizens and guilty of treason. All they had to do was say, “Caesar is Lord!” But committed Christians would insist, “No, Jesus is Lord!” Rather than deny Christ, young Valentine was arrested in the crackdown.

In jail, awaiting execution in the arena, Valentine wrote love letters to his beloved - - beautiful, passionate letters assuring her of his great love for her. One tradition says that, when he ran out of writing materials, through his cell window he could reach the petals of a fragile violet plant. He picked them and pierced them to spell out words such as “remember your Valentine” and other brief expressions of love. Then he would pass them on to friends who would take them to his lady love. But alas, theirs would be a love not lived out -- arms never entwined in the embrace of husband and wife. On February 14, 269 A.D., young Valentine was put to death, martyred for Jesus Christ. Since then, Christians have celebrated St. Valentine's fidelity to Christ and to romantic love on the 14th of February by sending our own love letters and other gifts to special people.

In Japan there are actually two Valentine Days: one in February and another in March, called “White Day.” On the first Valentine's Day, Japanese girls give chocolate to boys. On the second, the boys give to girls. The rationale behind this custom is that, with two different days to celebrate, no one is embarrassed if he or she buys a gift for someone who does not return the favor. There is even a special name for chocolate that is given out of guilt – “giri choko.”

The beauty of the Christian faith is that there is no “giri choko” gift exchange. God gives everything freely. He gave to the whole world the most precious “Valentine” of all – His own begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus died in order that we might live forever. What did we or anyone else in the world do to deserve this Gift? Absolutely nothing. God gave the gift of His Son, not because He wanted something in return, but out of His unconditional love with no strings attached.

Yes, Jesus Christ is God’s precious “Valentine” with no strings attached. God gives us the Love of His Father-heart freely. Our gifts to Him are really only a matter of joyfully returning a small portion to Him of that which is already His. Christ and His Gospel breaks us out of the cycle of required gift exchange. Receiving His free gifts, we desire, by His grace, to give freely – and moreover, we are even blessed in the giving! Happy St. Valentine’s Day!

Pastor Smith

Do you have a suggestion for the next “Mission Emphasis”?

Beginning in March 2017, Prince of Peace has highlighted four missions each year with what we call a quarterly “Mission Emphasis”.

In these past two years, the total amount of money given by our congregation to mission work has significantly increased. Additionally, having a mission focus has made it possible for us to witness the effect that our offerings have had on each of the missions we’ve supported. In short: "The Mission Emphasis of the Quarter" has been a very helpful thing, both for us and for those missions.

The next four missions will be chosen in the upcoming voters meeting on Sunday, March 10th. Do you have a suggestion that you would like the church voters to consider? Send your ideas to crossandcrown.newsletter@gmail.com.



Our Mission Emphasis for the first quarter of the new year is the mission work of **Rev. Gary and Stephanie Schulte** in Western and Central Africa, under the auspices of our Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. Envelopes for your contributions can be found on the credenza in the narthex. Read about their service in articles posted on our bulletin board, and on the LCMS website at lcms.org/schulte. And you can also follow them on Facebook: they’re always happy to welcome new friends!