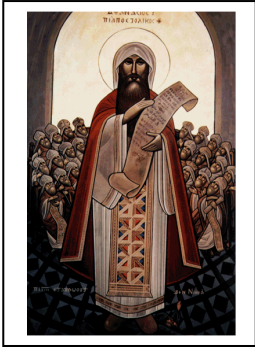


February 2010 Reflection



Dear Friends

Love is in the air! Isn't that what the month of February is most popular for? Indeed, the images of hearts, television commercials, and fat little cupids remind us that Valentine's Day is just around the corner!

February 14th is of course Valentine's Day and as you well know, the day is about love and it provides us the opportunity to express our love to those we care most about. Unfortunately, Valentine's Day has become rather secularized and commercialized, which really distracts from the original meaning of the day. You see, the origin of Valentine's Day traces back to the year 270 AD when, during the reign of Claudius II marriages were banned and Christians were under heavy persecution. Valentinus, a bishop in the early church was secretly marrying couples, helping martyred Christians, all the while strongly asserting that people should be free to experience the love God and share it with each other. As a result, Valentinus was thrown into jail! While he was in jail he tried to convert the emperor and the emperor tried to convert him. Valentinus didn't cave to the emperor, but boldly confessed his faith in Jesus Christ and subsequently received a death sentence. Before his death, Valentinus converted one of the emperor's lieutenants and his family. Legend states that Valentinus befriended the lieutenant's daughter and on the eve of his death he drafted a letter and signed it "from your valentine."

For the Christian, this account has great meaning and sheds some light on the commercialized Valentine's Day of our time. From this brief history, we learn of a man named Valentinus who knew the love his Lord Jesus had for him and all! Valentinus shared that love with all those he encountered, even at risk of persecution and death. In faith, Valentinus shared the Gospel, which is the truest expression of love. Sadly, his bold proclamation eventually led to his stoning, beating and beheading, but nonetheless, Valentinus knew the crown of life that awaited him in Jesus! In Christ Jesus is revealed the truest form of love. Now, when we wish to express our love we might send a card or chocolate to the one we care most about. Our gracious God on the other hand, expressed his love by sending his Son to take flesh to suffer and die for our sake. By that very act of love forgiveness and life eternal were won! Surely there is no greater love!

As Christians, like Valentinus, we are called to share that message of love! We are called to love as we have been loved by Christ. This, friends, is the deeper meaning of Valentine's Day-to share the love of Jesus in all we do and with all we encounter. From the story of Valentinus we learn that this mission isn't always easy and in the midst of it all, we may experience hardship and rejection. However, God is with us and by his power we are given the courage to stand firm and to act out in love even when rejected!

Undeniably, Valentine's Day is about love, but after learning a little about Valentinus we now know, that it is much deeper than any expression in a Hallmark Card! Indeed, the day connected to Valentinus is really about the love that God has for his creation and how that love is expressed to one another. Jesus' love for us is ongoing, never changing and a present reality. May our

expressions of love this Valentine's Day be a reflection of the love extended to us in Christ and like Valentinus, may we share that love unceasingly day after day to one another!

Love in the Name of Jesus,

Pastor Cal +