



Christian Education Bulletin Insert February, 2004

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St. Valentine's Day, February 14

Children will celebrate St Valentine's day at school by making cards for their friends and possibly having a party.

Tell them the story behind the celebration and use the day to emphasize our call to share God's love with others. There are some ideas below.

There may have been two Saint Valentines, both of them being imprisoned and martyred (killed for their faith) on Feb 14 in the third century after Christ. It is said that one of them

was asked to tutor his jailer's blind daughter, Julia. She loved her lessons and gradually came to believe in God. Valentine knelt with her in thanksgiving and also prayed for her sight to be restored. A brilliant light shone in the cell and Julia was able to see again. The night before his death, Valentine wrote her a goodbye note, encouraging her to stay faithful, and signing it "From your Valentine."

As children make Valentine cards, talk to them about the different kinds of love: a). love between a man and a woman, b). brotherly or sisterly love, or the love between friends, and c). selfless love, which is unconditional and puts others first and is the love with which God loves us, and which we should try to copy.

St. Valentine spent a long time in prison for his beliefs. If you live close to a prison, talk about prison ministry with children. Maybe you might send Valentines to people in prison telling them that you are praying for them and their families. Alternatively, find out about Amnesty International, the organization which tries to help political prisoners in different parts of the world. Go to www.amnesty.ca to find out about cases Amnesty is working on at the present time and how you might become involved through

writing brief letters or making a donation.

Have a Bible scavenger hunt in which family members see how many verses they can find which talk about love. Read them together. Which verse does each person like best and why?

Ash Wednesday and the Beginning of Lent, February 25

The season of Lent lasts for 40 days (excluding Sundays which are thought of as "little Easters," weekly reminders of the Resurrection) It is a time which has traditionally been set aside for prayer, fasting and an honest look at ourselves which leads to repentance. Originally, in the early church, Lent was a 40 hour time of fasting for those who were to be baptized at Easter. It was gradually changed to include everyone and to last 40 days. The number 40 was chosen because it is so significant in the Bible, Christ's 40 day fast in the wilderness being especially important. For Jesus, his time in the desert prepared him and gave him the strength he needed to embark upon and continue his ministry. For us it can also be a time when we grow in our faith and are empowered to new ministry.

Lent might be a time to re-evaluate the family commitment to prayer. If saying grace is not a habit, perhaps it could become one. If family prayers are not your practise, maybe you could start during Lent. It could be once a week to start with and gradually be extended to every day as people become more comfortable. A simple form of family prayer is as follows:-

- ! Start by reading a Bible story or a passage from scripture - depending on the ages of the children present. If you begin in Lent there are many booklets available through Christian bookstores or your local church which suggest a reading for each day.
- ! Sing a Christian song or hymn - one or two verses is sufficient.
- ! Pray. Pray for the world (use the newspaper to suggest people and places which need prayer) Thank God for the good things which have happened (take turns for this). Pray for those known to you for whom you have concerns - again take turns. Pray for individual needs. Conclude with the Lord's prayer.
- ! Finish with the Grace.