

# How Did We Get Valentine's Day?

In 313 A.D., Roman Emperor Constantine the Great legalized Christianity and ended Rome's persecution of Christians. In 380 A.D., Christianity becomes the official state religion of the Roman Empire. These actions not only enabled the teachings of Christianity to spread unhindered within the empire, it encouraged non-Christians to convert to the once-persecuted religion.

The pagans, however, who adopted Christianity as their religion did not entirely abandon the traditions and practices they held before their "conversion." One of these traditions brought into the church was the fertility celebration known as the Lupercalia, which eventually became the Valentine's holiday.

"Yet the vestiges of superstition were not absolutely obliterated, and the festival of the Lupercalia, whose origin had preceded the foundation of Rome, was still celebrated under the reign of Anthemius . . .

"After the conversion of the Imperial city (Rome), the Christians still continued, in the month of February, the annual celebration of the Lupercalia . . ." (The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire by Edward Gibbons, Chapter 36, Part 3).

Twenty-four years after the death of Emperor Anthemius, a "Christianized" form of the festival of Lupercalia was officially adopted by the Roman Catholic Church as a time to honor Saint Valentine.

"Early Christians were happier with the idea of a holiday honoring the saint of romantic causes than with one recognizing a pagan festival. In 496 A.D., Pope Gelasius named February 14 in honor of St. Valentine as the patron saint of lovers." (How Valentine's Day Works, April 1, 2000 article from Howstuffworks.com).

February 14th as the day to honor this person (the Catholic Church recognizes at least three martyred saints named Valentine or Valentinus) stayed on the church's Calendar of Saints until 1969 A.D. It was in this year that Pope Paul VI removed it from the calendar.

What Is Lupercalia?

The Valentine's holiday, as stated previously, is linked to the Lupercalia festival. This festival is partly based on the desire to honor Lupa, the she-wolf who (according to legend) nursed the infant orphans Romulus and Remus. Roman legend states that Romulus and Remus founded the city of Rome in 753 B.C. The pagan festival was also in honor of the Roman god Lupercus who was the god of shepherds. Lupercus was Rome's equivalent to the Greek god Pan.

The link between the Lupercalia, fertility, and romance in general is evident in the festivities that occurred during the celebrations (Valentine's Day, History Channel web site, retrieved Jan. 10, 2011).

The Greek historian Plutarch (c. 46 to 120 A.D.) also describes the Lupercalia and its relationship to fertility. The second-century Christian apologist Justin Martyr further links the worship of pagan gods to the Lupercalia when he writes of an image of "the Lycaean god, whom the Greeks call Pan and the Romans Lupercus," who is shown nude save for a girdle of goatskin.

**Symbolism**

Valentine symbols and their meaning have a long history, For example, red roses were the favorite flower of Venus, the Roman goddess of love. Red is also a color that signifies strong feelings like love.

An image of Cupid is commonly found on cards and even candy distributed on the Valentine's holiday. Cupid, in Roman mythology, is the god of desire, affection, attraction and erotic love. This pagan deity is usually shown shooting his bow to inspire romantic love.

It is unclear how we arrived at the familiar heart shape used for Valentine's celebration. One possibility involves the now-extinct North African plant silphium. The city-state of Cyrene had a lucrative trade in the plant that looks like the shape of a heart commonly used to celebrate the day.

Does It Matter?

Does God care whether Valentine's is celebrated? Does it matter it originated with pagan customs even though Christians adopted it?

When the Lord your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess . . . take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them . . . and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise'

You shall NOT worship the Lord your God in that way . . . (Deuteronomy 12:29 - 31, NKJV).

The origin of Valentine's Day and its symbols are rooted in the worship of false gods. The holiday has no basis in the Bible. Its celebration is unacceptable to God as it has symbolism and practices he does not endorse. It should be avoided by those looking to worship the Eternal in spirit and truth.

Source from Biblestudy.org: <https://www.biblestudy.org/basicart/what-is-true-origin-of-valentines-day.html>