

# around the year

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE SEASONS AND THE CHRISTIAN YEAR



## SAINT VALENTINE'S DAY

by **H. Hendry and E.F. Mason**

AN EXCERPT FROM *HOLIDAYS AND HAPPY DAYS* (1901)

Not very much is known about St. Valentine. Indeed, there were several saints of that name who were set down in the calendar for loving remembrance on the Fourteenth day of February. One of them was a martyr, and died for the Christian faith at Rome. But these saints have no connection with the ceremonies of St. Valentine's Day except that the priests of the early Christian Church set that particular day apart for a special feast. This feast was meant to take the place of certain ceremonies practised by the common people of the old world in their worship of the Roman gods. But the people did not easily forget their old customs, and some of these were, until recent times, practised on St. Valentine's Day in a new form.

One of these customs was for young men and maidens to

# From the Editor's Desk

February 1, 2016

Dear Readers:

*Lord, grant that I might not so much seek  
to be loved as to love.* — St. Francis of Assisi

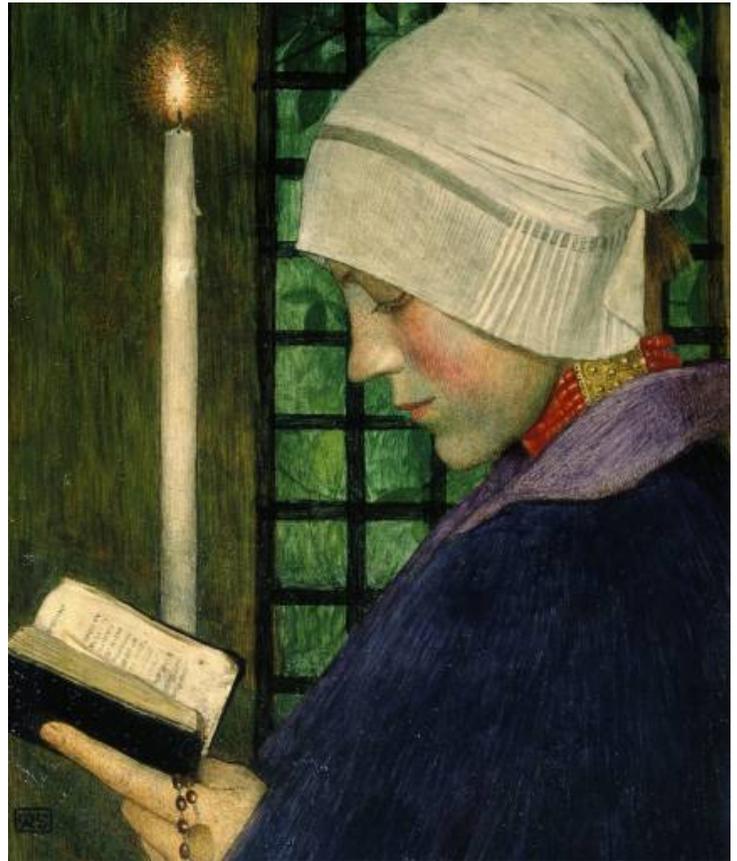
February is the month of love. It is the time when we scramble to find just the right card or gift to show our beloved how much we care. I am not so cynical as to believe that it's purely commercialism at work and I'll always be happy to receive flowers, especially when the winter doldrums are at their peak. I'm also a fan of **handmade valentines**, and I'm looking forward to making some with my children this year (see page 6).

Romantic love is wonderful, no doubt, but let's not forget about all that February has to offer. The **Feast of St. Brigid**, patron saint of Ireland, takes place on February 1<sup>st</sup> and can be a lovely celebration for those with Irish roots. You might find humorous and enlightening a poem attributed to St. Brigid herself (see page 5).

February 2<sup>nd</sup> is the **Feast of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple**, and the Purification of the Virgin Mary, colloquially known as **Candlemas**. Visit [aroundtheyear.org/candlemas](http://aroundtheyear.org/candlemas) to see some ideas to celebrate Candlemas with your family.

February is a month awash in feasts for female saints, among them **Agatha** on the 5<sup>th</sup>, **Scholastica** on the 10<sup>th</sup>, and **Bernadette** on the 18<sup>th</sup> (you can find some wonderful quotes from St. Bernadette on page 5). They are all wonderful examples of women with deep faith in God.

*Kelli Ann Wilson, Editor*  
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Coming to *around the year* in March  
St. Patrick's Day, Easter, & more!

cast lots in the choice of partners. Upon the eve of St. Valentine's Day, in England, it was usual for young people to meet together, each one writing his or her name upon a piece of paper. When this was done the papers were rolled up tightly and put into two bowls. Then each young man drew the name of a girl and she was his *Valentine*, and each girl drew the name of a young man and he was her *Valentine*. It was little more than a merry mode of choosing partners for the festival of St. Valentine; but sometimes the



VINTAGE VALENTINE ILLUSTRATED BY KATE GREENAWAY (1876)

young folks took this choice by lot quite seriously, and the partnership ended in marriage.

With the English poets St. Valentine's Day has always been a favourite. You will find it mentioned by Chaucer, Shakespere, and many another of lesser note. At one time it was not uncommon for a young man to send a set of verses to his *Valentine* on the morning of the 14th of February. Most of these were very poor verses, but sometimes a true poet sent a greeting to his Valentine. As when Drayton sent these happy lines:

*Muse, bid the Morn awake,  
Sad winter now declines,  
Each bird doth choose a mate;  
This day's St. Valentines  
For that good Bishop's sake  
Get up and let us see  
What beauty it shall be  
That fortune us assigns.*

Nowadays St. Valentine's Day has lost nearly all its popularity; certainly, it has lost all its merry charm. The time is not so distant—your fathers and mothers may remember it—when the



postman's bag was laden with valentines upon St. Valentine's Day. Some of them were in large embossed envelopes and the valentines themselves were glittering things. There was nearly always a little gilt Cupid with his bow and arrows, and the mottoes and verses were always very very sentimental. Now the sending of valentines has fallen into disfavour, especially the pretty ones.

- H.H. & E.F.M

## WELCOME WINTER BIRDS

One may wonder how these tiny winter visitors survive in the bitter temperatures that arrive this time of year. Here are a few ideas to make things a little easier for them: provide a variety of foods, especially ones that are high in fat and calories like oil sunflower and suet; locate feeders out of the wind on the east or southeast part of your yard, and preferably near a row of trees or other roosting area; don't forget to include a ground feeder or scatter seeds for those birds who like to feed at ground level (juncos, mourning doves, etc); and offer peanuts, a favorite of blue jays and squirrels—choose the unsalted, dry roasted variety. **Source:** "Winter Bird Feeding," by Wild Birds Unlimited, WBU.com

FEBRUARY 2016



## **Simeon's Prophecy**

*by Cyril Robert*

How still she stood that day,  
As one apart,  
Hearing the jagged words  
That tore her heart.  
But when the Child was still,  
And Joseph slept,  
She turned her face away,  
And wept, and wept.

## **A Poem by St. Brigid of Kildare**

I'd like to give a lake of beer to God.  
I'd love the heavenly  
Host to be tippling there  
For all eternity.

I'd love the men of Heaven to live with me,  
To dance and sing.  
If they wanted, I'd put at their disposal  
Vats of suffering.

White cups of love I'd give them  
With a heart and a half;  
Sweet pitchers of mercy I'd offer  
To every man.

I'd make Heaven a cheerful spot  
Because the happy heart is true.  
I'd make the men contented for their own sake.  
I'd like Jesus to love me too.

I'd like the people of heaven to gather  
From all the parishes around.  
I'd give a special welcome to the women,  
The three Marys of great renown.

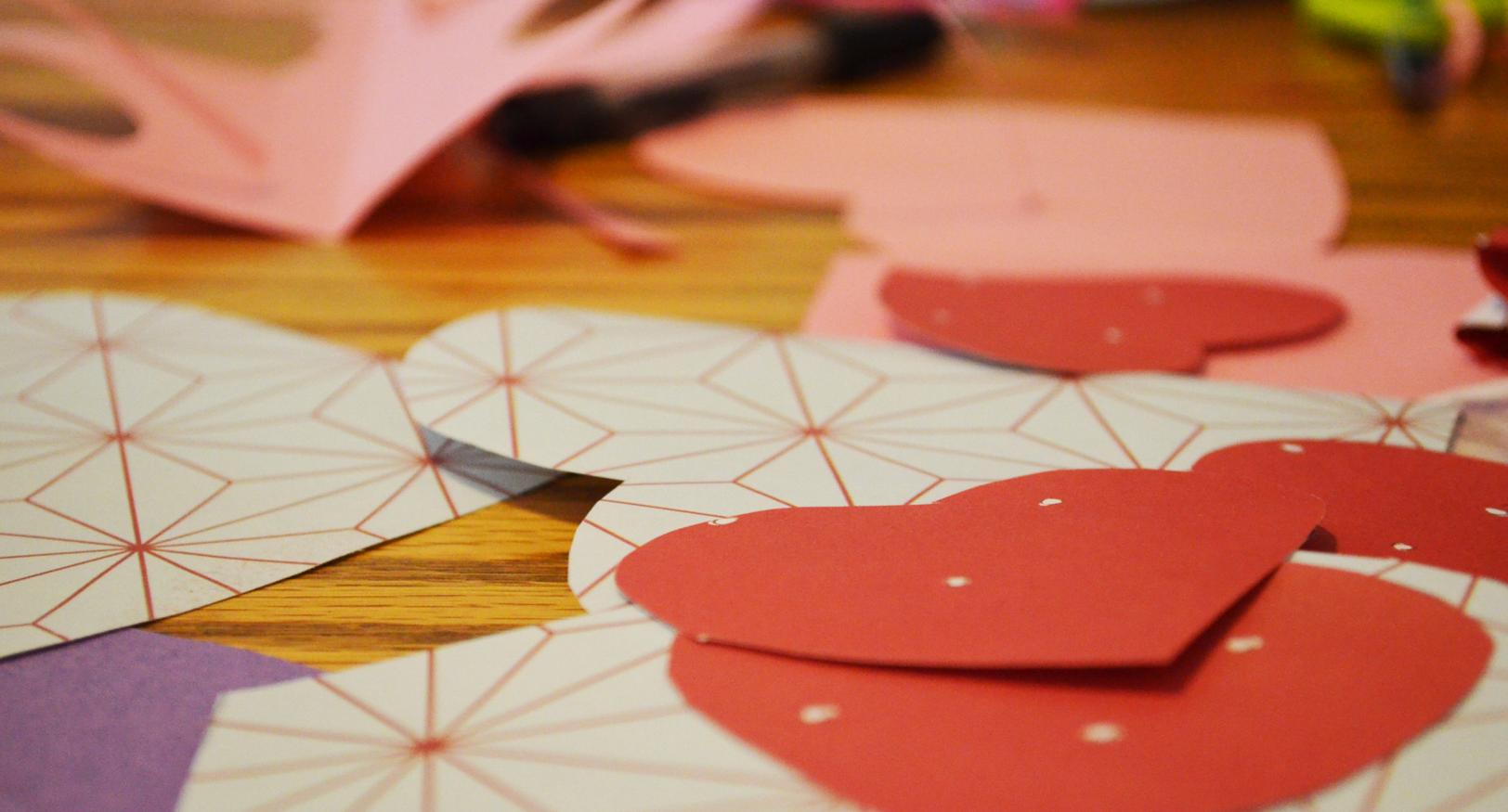
I'd sit with the men, the women and God  
There by the lake of beer.  
We'd be drinking good health forever  
And every drop would be a prayer.

## **Quotes from St. Bernadette (Feast Day February 18th)**

“I shall spend every moment loving. One who loves does not notice her trials; or perhaps more accurately, she is able to love them.”

“God is always present. Nothing happens without His permission or outside of His will. Anything we do to others we do to Him. All kindness and goodness are in Him.”

“For the greater glory of God, the important thing is not to do many things, but to do all things well.”



## VALENTINE'S DAY CARDS



Most of us can recall at least one Valentine's Day celebration from our youth. I'm not sure how it worked in prior generations, but in my time schools were attempting to make sure that the exchanging of valentines was an inclusive experience. Each year we would get a class list, and then someone (usually Mom) would take us to the store to buy a package of cards to distribute. Those who included candy with their cards were sure to be very popular, indeed!

Now that I have children of my own, I have the chance to revisit the Valentine's Day card tradition. My

daughter, from her earliest school days, was always wanting to create her own cards; nothing store bought would do. At first this struck me as a needless aggravation—who wants to handcraft 20, 30, sometimes 40 cards?—but, over time I've really come to appreciate, and even embrace, her desire to do this.

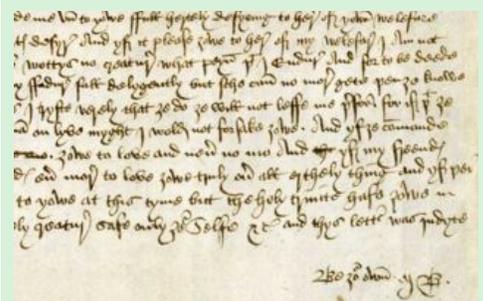
Making your own valentines is surprisingly inexpensive: you can buy a 100-pack of heart-shaped paper doilies for less than \$10. Paper doilies are nostalgic and they make a great foundation for embellishments of your choosing: construction paper cutouts, stickers, marker drawings, glitter, or whatever looks beautiful to you.

Even if you don't have young children at home, you might find it fun to make some old-fashioned valentines to give to friends and family, both near and far. Let's breathe new life into this time-honored tradition by making our own cards this year.

*An excerpt from the earliest known valentine written in English, by Margery Brews to her fiance John Paston in 1477. The original is housed at the British Library:*

"And if you command me to keep me true wherever I go, indeed I will do all my might you to love and never anyone else. And if my friends say that I do amiss, they shall not stop me from doing so. My heart me bids evermore to love you truly over all earthly things. And if they be never so angry, I trust it shall be better in time coming. No more to you at this time, but the Holy Trinity have you in keeping. And I beseech you that this bill be not seen by any non earthly creature save only yourself. And this letter was written at Topcroft with full heavy heart.

"Be your own Margery Brews."



**Source:** "Valentine's Day Love Letter," British Library, [www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk), 2016

## FEBRUARY 2016

**February 1st:** St. Brigid of Ireland, patroness of babies, blacksmiths, dairy workers, midwives, and many more.

**February 2nd:** **Presentation of Jesus at the Temple** (Candlemas)

**February 4th:** Feast of St. Blaise, patron of animals, builders, and those suffering from diseases of the throat.

**February 5th:** Feast of St. Agatha, patroness of bakers and those with breast cancer.

**February 10th:** Feast of St. Scholastica, twin sister of St. Benedict, and patroness of nuns.

**February 14th:** Feast of St. Valentine, patron of engaged couples, bee keepers, and love.

**February 18th:** Feast of St. Bernadette, patroness of shepherds and those ridiculed for their faith.

### Stay in touch!

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I'm currently looking for individuals who might be interested in contributing to *around the year* (both the website and the newsletters). If you enjoy what I've created and would like to become involved, please contact me! [kelli@aroundtheyear.org](mailto:kelli@aroundtheyear.org)

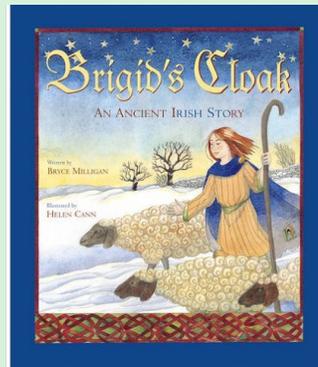


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## Recommended Reading

CHILDREN'S BOOKS FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY



***Brigid's Cloak***, written by Bryce Milligan and illustrated by Helen Cann

*From the publisher:*

*Brigid's Cloak* retells an ancient tale about one of Ireland's most beloved saints. On the day she is born Brigid receives a brilliant blue cloak from a mysterious Druid. Years later, the young girl still wears the now

tattered but beloved cloak while she tends her sheep. Is it her imagination that suddenly takes her to an unfamiliar land? Or is it something far greater that leads Brigid to a crowded inn in a town called Bethlehem?

***The Holy Twins: Benedict & Scholastica***, written by Kathleen Norris, illustrated by Tomie dePaola

*From the publisher:*

The twins, Benedict and Scholastica, grew up as lively best friends in northern Italy, but their paths diverged when it became time for them to enter adulthood. Benedict's life was filled with dramatic moments and miracles as he grew into an important spiritual leader. Scholastica lived a quieter life, but she remained a strong influence on her brother as he developed the Rule of St. Benedict, which guides the Benedictine order to this day.

