



Spiritual Care Notes: February 2019

February in Boston means the social event of mid-winter, the Beanpot hockey tournament. The first two Monday nights of the month determine which of the four local college hockey teams – Boston College, Boston University, Harvard, and Northeastern – earn bragging rights to call themselves the best in Boston for the next twelve months. Occasionally the championship game ends up being played on February 14. My wife is very glad I gave up my tickets those years (so am I)!

Around the world, February also means Valentine's Day. Not much is reliably known about St. Valentine of Rome, but the Church still recognizes this third-century priest and martyr as the patron saint of love, young people, and happy marriages. Many legends abound regarding the life of St. Valentine. One such legend holds that St. Valentine was imprisoned by then-Roman Emperor Claudius II for uniting Christian couples in marriage. Despite his offenses, Valentine and Claudius seemed to get along – that is, until Valentine tried to evangelize the emperor. Claudius ordered Valentine to be beheaded unless he renounced his faith. Valentine died a martyr's death on February 14; the exact year is variously recorded as somewhere between 269 and 280 A.D.

A priest I know delivered one of the best homilies about St. Valentine that I've heard. He said that St. Valentine's priestly life mirrored the unselfish and unconditional love that Jesus Christ had for his spouse, the Church. Married Christian couples reflect this same love when they live out every day their vow to love, honor and cherish each other – no matter what – and forsaking all others, as long as they both shall live.

Christian spouses sacrifice unselfishly for each other. They do it for no other reason than unconditional love. And when it's done out of unconditional love, it really isn't a sacrifice at all; it's something you want to do because you love that person so much.

Whether you're married or single, may Christ's love be in your heart this Valentine's Day.

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