

From the Pulpit
with Very Reverend Allister Kelley OSFS
The Vicar-General of New Zealand

Yes, there was a Saint Valentine. In fact, it seems there were many early Christian martyrs named Valentine. But people do not think of these saints when they celebrate St. Valentine's Day. February 14 is a more superficial celebration of 'romantic love', popularised by Medieval artists, Renaissance poets and contemporary commercial entrepreneurs. This is far from the witness of early Christian Valentines who died as martyrs in love of their God.

I think it was C.S. Lewis who most publicly proclaimed that "love is not a feeling. Love is a decision of the will." Unfortunately, Valentine's day is mostly about a 'feeling' of 'love'. The problem of this 'feeling' of love, is that if I had to wait for the feeling before I loved, I wouldn't get around to actually loving very often. Christian love is a decision to love others not because I like them, or because I feel love for them, but because God has first loved me. When I know I am loved by God, this knowledge wells up irrepressibly, and spills over into every word I speak and each action I carry out. This love is therefore not hard work. It is simply the natural human response to the deep knowledge that I am already loved. And when I live this decision to love, more often than not, the feeling of love follows.

May love be with you always.