By Pat Haggerty

I was trying to put some religious meaning into Valentine's Day. It was called St. Valentine's Day at one point, wasn't it? Are we supposed to emulate this saint, and what was he all about?

When I looked at the calendar from church---the one with all the feast days and holy days on it, Saint Valentine was nowhere to be found. In fact, the observance for February 14th was for Saints Cyril and Methodius. What happened to poor Valentine? Well, it seems that there were several saints named Valentine. The one often referred to was a Roman priest martyred in 269 under Claudius II. His feast day was originally observed by the Church. However, his commemoration was removed from the General Calendar when it was revised in 1969. His commemoration is still observed by Traditionalist Roman Catholics who use the General Roman Calendar of 1962. So, there it is!

I still wondered how to extract some religious meaning from a secular holiday. I got my answer from the actions of my grandson. It was so clear! When I picked him up from nursery school, he was more exuberant than ever. He chatted about his friends, the Valentine cards they shared, and the festivities of the morning. While in the car, he poured over his cards commenting on each one of them and talking animatedly about his friends. There was real love there, and it just wasn't about the cards. Before dropping him off at daycare, we stopped at a coffee shop. He insisted on picking up a "treat" for his daycare provider Lynne. It was a large sugar cookie heart with pink sugar crystals all around it. When we arrived at her home, he presented it to her with the words, "this is a special treat just for you."

Later, I reflected on Will's excitement and caring. Why can't we bring that same spirit of joy and caring to the daily practice of our faith? Why can't we interact with others as if each day were Valentine's Day? We don't have to give cards to show people our love. We can act tenderly, treat others with respect, and sometimes go "above and beyond" to show we care. This is what we are meant to do as followers of Jesus.

Years ago, a friend gave me a beautiful framed quote as a gift. I still have it on my wall. It is the perfect connection to my thoughts on Valentine's Day. It reads: "The greatest gift we can give one another is rapt attention to one another's existence."

Let us honor those we meet with our attention and love. Let us listen to them, help them, and see in them the face of Jesus.