

## WHAT MAKES VALENTINES DAY SPECIAL?

*One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. (Romans 14:5-8)*

Every holiday is unique in its own way, except perhaps for those Monday holidays which are only observed by the government and banks. In fact, the very word "holiday" suggest a day which is different from other days.

Every society has holidays. Some countries observe historical events. Other nations place a great deal of emphasis on religious celebrations. Even Mardi Gras has a spiritual origin, though, from my experience of the Mardi Gras celebration, there is not much of the sacred left in the event.

As you might suspect, the word "holiday" literally means a "holy day." Of course, the word "holy" means set apart. Therefore, a holiday is a day which is set apart from the others. Some holidays are more set apart than others. Christmas requires an entire week to celebrate after a month of preparation. The past President's birthdays barely receive an occasional mention.

Other holidays are the subject of debate and even anger. Most states observe Martin Luther King's birthday which seems reasonable. However, other states refuse to make this a holiday, apparently believing state employees already miss enough work.

That reminds me, some holidays are observed without any official declaration by the President or Congress. No one pays them much attention anyway until they raise taxes. Super Bowl Sunday is one of those holidays that has just evolved. People take the day off (even if it is Sunday). They plan family gatherings. Churches alter schedules and there is much celebration. It is only a matter of time until they move it to Monday and close all the banks.

As I said at the outset, every holiday is unique in its own way. I would like to explain why Valentine's Day is a very special day. The following is my list of reasons why it is important to observe this day set apart for love.

It is the only day of the year where you can give a box of high calorie chocolates to a fat person and not feel guilty. Everyone expects to get candy on Valentine's Day. It might plunge our nation into a recession if we only purchased candy for skinny folks. So, we set aside February fourteenth as a day to give candy to everyone, regardless of the testimony of their bathroom scales.

Valentine's Day is one of the few holidays that we still celebrate on a particular date, rather than moving to Monday. To my knowledge, the only others are Christmas, New Years Day and the fourth of July. Even Easter changes every year. I suspect there will be a movement some day to celebrate Christmas on Monday. It is confusing for employers when it falls in the middle of the week. Should they give more than one day off, or be a Scrooge and require everyone to work on Christmas Eve? It would be somewhat ridiculous to observe the fourth of July on the sixth just because its Monday. The same is true with New Year's Day. It

just wouldn't seem right to start the New Year on January third because it happens to be Monday.

Valentine's Day is a welcome break in the middle of a dreary month. It is a refreshing respite in the middle of the most bleak month of the year. In fact, February is so dismal that it only has twenty-eight days rather than the usual thirty or thirty-one. Nobody wants it to last any longer than necessary. Outside of a few birthdays, nothing special ever happens in February. How many weddings have you attended in February? Football season is over and it is usually too cold for the kids to play outside. Sometimes a school will schedule spring break for February. This seems to be an attempt to hasten the demise of winter.

Valentine's Day is an opportunity for youngsters to begin the process of courtship without the pressures of actually taking someone on a date. There will be a lot of embarrassed smiles as the Hallmark Valentines are distributed in school parties. Kids can let that special someone know they are liked without having to make it a big deal.

Valentine's Day is a holiday that really celebrates something meaningful to everyone - love. It is difficult for me to become emotionally involved in the President's Birthday or Labor Day. For some reason, they do not arouse much sentiment. But, Valentine's Day is different. I appreciate being loved. Almost everyone can celebrate Valentine's Day because almost everyone is loved by someone. Love truly is blind. Some of the most homely people in the world are someone's sweetheart.

Since nobody is off work on Valentine's Day you do not have to go on a picnic or visit your in-laws. Both of these are sure-fire ways to turn a holiday into something less enjoyable.

These are the reasons why Valentine's Day is a very special holiday in my book. Now, I realize there are some drawbacks as well. Perhaps the most significant is the way it forces men into the uncomfortable situation of having to go shopping. I don't intend to be chauvinistic, but shopping is really woman's work. Very few men actually enjoy the experience.

A gift shop is not usually a very pleasant locale. It begins before you even enter the store. The nauseating fragrance of a thousand candles and cellophane wrapped potpourri greets you when you open the door. Then you have to elbow your way into a crowd of men who are pawing the cards designated for valentines. Then comes that difficult decision of whether to purchase one that is mushy and sentimental or to get that one which makes you chuckle but is a little off-color. When it seems that you have located the perfect card, the envelope is missing. So, the search continues.

Unless you are really a stickler for details, this whole process can be completed in under ten minutes. A small price to pay for the joy this card will evoke. That special sweetheart will not know that you bought the first card that caught your eye. She will probably think you spent hours perusing the selection until you found the one that said exactly what was on your heart. Thus, everyone is happy.

February fourteenth is a special day. Lets hope that Cupid continues to aim his arrow into hearts for many years to come. Lets also hope they don't make it into another Monday holiday.