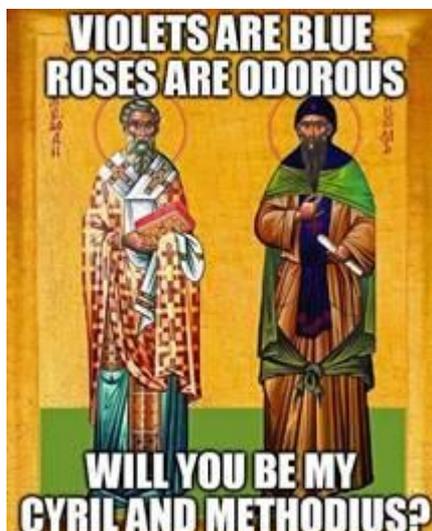


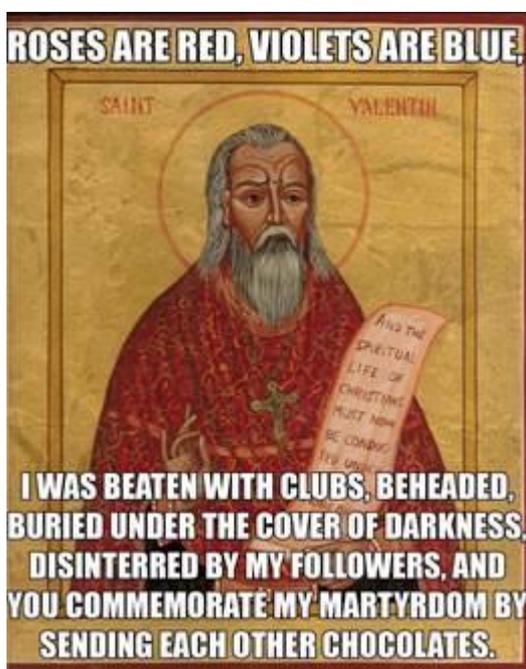
Dear all

Yesterday I talked very briefly about today – the Sunday Next Before Lent. Of course, to most people, today is St Valentine's Day, or, more likely, just Valentine's Day. Any religious connotations are often the last thing that comes to mind. Interestingly, the Church of England does not commemorate St Valentine at all. Instead, it celebrates 14<sup>th</sup> February as the Feast of St Cyril & St Methodius. It doesn't slip off the tongue quite the same, does it?



Wikipedia states that **Cyril** (born Constantine, 826–869) and **Methodius** (815–885) were two brothers and Byzantine Christian theologians and missionaries. For their work evangelizing the Slavs, they are known as the "Apostles to the Slavs". They are credited with devising the Glagolitic alphabet, the first alphabet used to transcribe Old Church Slavonic. After their deaths, their pupils continued their missionary work among other Slavs. Both brothers are venerated in the Orthodox Church as saints with the title of "equal-to-apostles". In 1880, Pope Leo XIII introduced their feast into the calendar of the Roman Catholic Church. In 1980, Pope John Paul II declared them co-patron saints of Europe, together with Benedict of Nursia.

I think there is something quite special in that all major branches of the Christian faith can unite round a pair of saints who were largely significant in a specific geographical area. And they were so committed to evangelism that they devised a whole new alphabet to further this mission more successfully. Perhaps it is a shame for us that 14<sup>th</sup> February has become so associated with our particular saint.



So why has Valentine not been so commemorated, and why has he been connected with romance? Wikipedia notes that there are 14 different St Valentines listed, 3 of which are associated with 14<sup>th</sup> February. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* and other hagiographical sources speak of three Saints Valentine that appear in connection with February 14. One was a Roman priest, another the bishop of Interamna (modern Terni, Italy) both buried along the Via Flaminia outside Rome, at different distances from the city. The third was said to be a saint who suffered on the same day with a number of companions in the Roman province of Africa, of whom nothing else is known. There are enough similarities in the biographies of the first two to suggest that they might in fact be the same person.

Perhaps the vagueness of the stories accounts for the reluctance of the Church of England to commemorate the day. The connection with 'Valentines' is that, legend has it, Valentine restored sight to the blind daughter of a local judge, who subsequently converted to Christianity, with his whole household. Valentine was later sentenced to death for his evangelistic activities, and from his condemned cell, he wrote a note to the judge's daughter, signed "from your Valentine". And, thus, a whole industry was born.

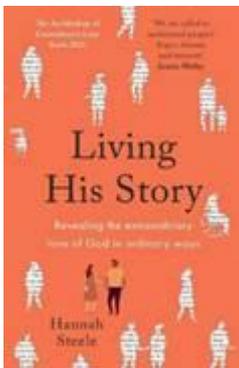
A recent post I saw on Facebook was seeking advice. I would like to give my wife roses for Valentine's Day. Should I give her 1, or 2, half a dozen, or a dozen... Or should I give her the whole tin? Hmmm!

It is my usual habit to take the spring half-term holiday as a holiday myself. Unfortunately, that's not quite going to work this year, but I intend to take, in addition to my normal Tuesday, Monday 15<sup>th</sup>, Friday 19<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> off.

**Ash Wednesday service details.** The Ash Wednesday communion will take place at 4.00pm on Ash Wednesday, live on Facebook, but it can be viewed anytime later. During the service the stones with ash crosses will be blessed. A reminder, if you would like one, let me know by Wednesday so I can prepare them. So far 10 people have expressed an interest.

Readings – Joel 2: 1-2, 12-17; 2 Corinthians 5: 20b – 6:10; Psalm 51: 1-18; John 8: 1-11  
Hymns: Jesu, lover of my soul. Purify my heart.

### Lent Course:



Next Thursday is the day after Ash Wednesday, and so we will put our study of Mark's gospel on hold, and instead follow our Lent Course. The details are the same as always:

We will meet on Zoom, Thursdays 2.30-3.30ish pm. The Zoom details are:

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/8109399155?pwd=STVVTU44RzJxTFFHbTY1MnI0bjJZz09>

Meeting ID: 810 939 9155

Passcode: 1w2C9a

Please note that, on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February the Lent Course will take place in the morning, at 10.30am.

A reminder that, for those interested, you can see an interview with the author: **Living His Story with Justin Welby - Hannah Steele in conversation with Justin Welby** about her book written for Lent 2021  
Date: Tuesday 16th February at 11.30am.

Register at: [https://zoom.us/webinar/register/9316113316059/WN\\_rad8gGmzQySHgjeeVajEA](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/9316113316059/WN_rad8gGmzQySHgjeeVajEA)

Today's musical offerings are a variety of versions of Psalm 51.

Firstly, Anglican chant:

[PSALM 51 CHANT BY Choir of Westminster Abbey \(gospel hymn\) - YouTube](#)

Allegrì's iconic Miserere:

[Vatican 1600 \(Allegrì's Miserere performed by the Tallis Scholars\) - YouTube](#)

A modern take from the Sons of Korah can be found here:

[Sons Of Korah Psalm 51 - YouTube](#)

And a Hebrew version:

[Choneni Elohim, from Psalm 51 \(Be Gracious to me O G-d\) - YouTube](#)

Finally, another Lenten anthem – Call to remembrance by Farrent.

[Farrant: Call to Remembrance - YouTube](#)



Stay safe.

Blessings and love

Mark