

FLOWERS CAN SAY IT ALL!

Any kind of celebration whether a grand affair or a small family gathering offers the opportunity for decoration in a special way. It may have a particular theme or colour scheme or incorporate appropriate accessories but whatever the occasion, flowers can say it all!

We have two occasions coming shortly – St. Valentine's Day and Mothering Sunday. Judging by the occasional letter to the papers some cynics would have you believe that these two events were initiated by florists purely as a means of making more money, however their floral connections can be explained.

St. Valentine's Day

This is a traditional day when love tokens are exchanged, often anonymously. A popular token is a gift of flowers. The giving of red roses is a custom that can apparently be traced back to Louis XVI of France, who sent them to his wife, Marie Antoinette. However some claim that the first Valentine was sent in 1415 by Charles, Duke of Orleans, to his wife during his imprisonment in the Tower of London. Also during the mid February festival of Lupercalia, originally a Roman festival of purification – it was traditional for men to approach a woman they admired with a hand-written message of affection containing the name of St. Valentine as a good luck token towards their intentions.

So who was St. Valentine? He was a Roman priest and doctor who was put to death for his Christian beliefs. During his imprisonment, he fell in love with his jailor's daughter who was blind. Just before his death he restored her sight and left her a farewell token "From your Valentine".

Now (thank-you Louis, Charles and Mr. Original!), some 50 million roses, mainly red ones, will be traded worldwide on February 14th.

Mothering Sunday (March 10th this year)

This celebration has a religious association and is held on a Sunday in mid-Lent when the Pope blesses the Golden Rose and children feast on simnel cakes. Bunches of violets are the traditional emblem derived from the pre-reformation custom of visiting the Mother Church on that Sunday. Also children, particularly young girls, were allowed the day off work to be at home.

The commercial aspect happened in 1872 when a Boston matron, Julie Howe, proposed an official "Day for Mothers". In the United States it is celebrated on the second Sunday in May, while in Russia it is called "Women and Wives Day", on March 8th. Whatever the date, we've earned it!

As it was pointed out to me recently. .."A mother is for life, not just for Christmas".

Heather, of Heather's Flowers.