

# Rekindling the Romance

"I notice that those couples who seem to have the most joyful relationships are those who have a sense of awe for the other person. It's as if they see the other as this amazing, undeserved gift in their life. They are deeply grateful for them and also entranced by the other who they never seem to presume to fully comprehend. They bring a kind of reverent curiosity to their relationship."

- Francine

The trick to sustaining romance is to stay in touch with mystery of the other. Here are three simple habits to help the romance grow and endure.

## 1. Hear the Mystery

Share with each other a cherished hope you have for your future. Listen carefully to each other. Don't hurry this... take time to really let their hope be fully revealed.

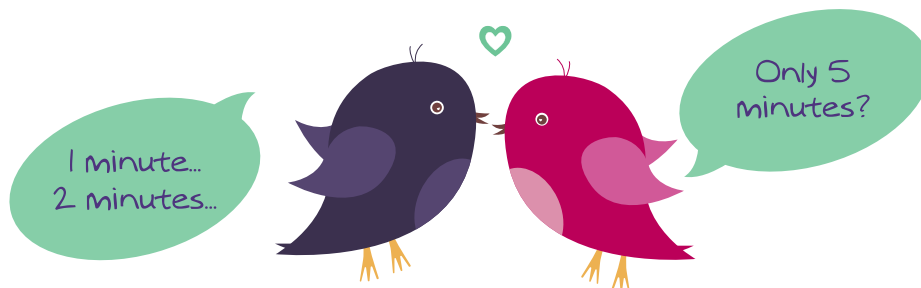
## 2. See the Mystery

Make time to watch each other at work or play. Look into each other's eyes with love and acceptance. Try holding your gaze for five minutes, using only your eyes to communicate your openness.

## 3. Speak the Mystery

Express your wonder and gratitude for all that the other is in your life. Express it in prayer, express to each other, express to your family and friends. Become your lover's cheer squad and advocate.

### The Lover's Gaze Challenge



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# Romance and Mystery

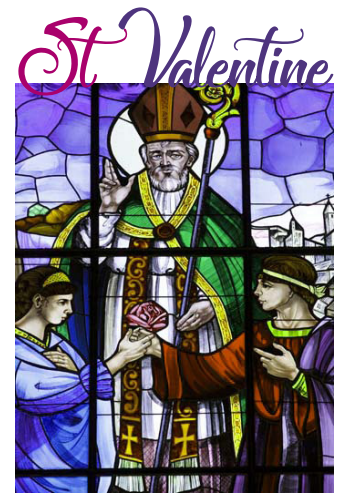
St Valentine's Day (Feb 14) has become a popular feast among people of many religious persuasions. It's origins as a Christian feast remind us of the importance of romantic love and marriage.

One of the things that makes a new romance so exciting and attractive is the element of uncertainty: *Is this person really interested in me? Will this person really be the one I've longed for?*

We can all relate to the thrill of the start-up relationship where the other is essentially still a stranger and quite mysterious to us. *Where is this all going to lead?* The suspense is both thrilling and invigorating!

This initial thrill is the stuff of movies and music and is an intoxicating experience. Yet it is also very limited. It captures nothing of the magnificence of a couple's devotion which has stayed strong over decades and matured into a love that can be truly relied upon.

Deep Christian love depends on more than the romantic feelings that come from 'falling in love'; it requires a deliberate wilful and intentional loving.



### FACT FILE

St Valentine was a Bishop in Rome who was imprisoned for performing marriages for Christian soldiers against the decree of the Roman Emperor, Claudius II. While in jail, Valentine healed the blind daughter of his jailor and they became friends. He was eventually beheaded in Rome on February 14, 269 AD, signing a farewell note to the young girl with 'From Your Valentine'.

His feast day became a popular celebration among couples in the eighteenth century, who expressed their devotion with greeting cards which were known as 'Valentines'.

St Valentine is the patron saint of engaged couples, happy marriages, epileptics, travellers and bee keepers.

Image: Stained glass window in the Basilica of St Valentine, Terni depicts St Valentine presenting a rose to a quarrelling couple as he coaches them on how to hold it (and each other) gently.



# In Good Times... and Bad

## Keeping Romance Alive

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**“Over the years I’ve noticed that when pragmatism dominates our relationship, we are less playful and more prone to criticism. Conversely, when we are more romantic with each we are also more gentle and forgiving.” - Byron**

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Romance carries with it a sense of playfulness and delight in one another, and is not only for the young. Mature couples need it too. In fact, couples often ask about how to keep the romance in their marriage, because it is associated with relationship health and good will.

One way is to remember that we can never know all there is to know about the person we love; there is always something more to know and love about him or her.

Romance happens because we are mystery to each other, and so an attitude of curiosity and wonder about each other’s differences helps to

sustain a couple’s romance over the years. Men and women are different. Our differences can divide us as the years go by, or we can choose to see them working as a complementary force, attracting us deeper into the mystery of the other.

Mystery is foundational in our most intimate relationship because it connects us profoundly to divine love, which will always be a mystery to us.

The mystery of being loved so intimately by our romantic lover is that it reveals to us the urgency and intimacy with which God loves us: Can it really be that I am loved so deeply?

It’s easy to feel romantic in the good times when things are easy between us and life is fairly simple. The early years, especially the newlywed period, are often high points in a couple’s love history when maintaining a romantic connection is uncomplicated.

It’s important for couples to be proactive in fostering romance in these good times lest they fall into the trap of thinking that romance is spontaneous and effortless. Too many couples founder because they fail to make the most of the opportunity to set up romance habits that will see them through their life together.

As heart-warming as young romance is, there is something even more amazing about the romance witnessed in couples of advanced years. Like the tender attention given to a spouse who is seriously ill or the patient acceptance of a spouse with dementia.

It is in moments such as these, when one’s devotion to the other surpasses expectations, that the world witnesses the real power of romantic love.

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**“There is no guarantee that we will feel the same way all through life. Yet if a couple can come up with a shared and lasting life project, they can love one another and live as one until death do them part, enjoying an enriching intimacy. The love they pledge is greater than any emotion, feeling or state of mind, although it may include all of these. It is a deeper love, a lifelong decision of the heart.”**  
**Pope Francis, The Joy of Love, 163**

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**The devotion and care of our lover in his or her lowest and most helpless moments is the purest romance. It is the fruit of years of generous loving in good times.**

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