Thank you for joining us for today’s Spotlight program. I’m Liz Waid. And I’m Rebekah Schipper. Spotlight uses a special English method of broadcasting. It is easier for people to understand, no matter where in the world they live. It happened 1,700 years ago, in Rome. The story says that he was in prison for being a Christian. He performed marriages even though they were illegal. The government captured him and put him in prison. One day the government would execute him. While he was in prison, he met a beautiful girl. She visited his prison cell often. She was the daughter of the prison guard. He and the girl began to pass notes to each other through the prison bars. They loved each other. When it was time for the prison to execute him, he sent her one last letter. The last note he sent to her was a love note. He ended it, “from, your Valentine.” Some people believe that this is the story that started it all. You may already know what we are talking about. Today’s Spotlight is on Valentines Day! People all around the world celebrate this holiday devoted to love. They celebrate it in many different ways. But the message is the same everywhere - love! Join us today as we tell about the different ways people all around the world celebrate their love for each other! No one really knows if this story about Valentine and the prison guard’s daughter is true. But the holiday is named after at least two men, each named Valentine. Both of these men died because of their faith - one in 197, and one in 269. Later, the Christian church recognized these men. Historians have little information about either of them. But, historians do believe that both men died on February 14th. February 14 became Saint Valentine’s Day - a special day to celebrate their lives. This is the day that many people celebrate as Valentine’s Day. Historical documents show that, originally, Valentine’s Day had little to do with love. Ancient Romans did have a fertility celebration in February. But, a recorded link between Valentine’s Day and love did not appear until about 1,200 years later. In 1382 Geoffrey Chaucer wrote a poem about love. He was a famous English Poet. The poem told about birds coming together half-way through the second month of the year. The birds met on this day, Valentine’s Day, to mate. The poem influenced many people. And soon after, other writers began to use these ideas in their own writing. The link between Valentine’s Day and love became common! By the 17th century, Valentine’s Day was a common celebration all over Great Britain. About a hundred years later, people began to exchange small gifts or notes on Valentine’s Day. These gifts were an expression of love between family, friends, and lovers. Today, many people still celebrate Valentine’s Day in this way - people in Canada, Mexico, the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Australia. The most popular gift to exchange is the greeting card. It is usually just a simple paper note that expresses love or devotion. A person can send a Valentine’s Day greeting card to his lover, his parents, his co-worker, or even his doctor! In fact, the Greeting Card Association says that world-wide, people send over one thousand million [1,000,000,000] greeting cards every Valentine’s Day! But greeting cards are not the only thing people exchange. Besides sending a card, a couple may go out to a special dinner. They may buy each other a present, or just some good-tasting candy or chocolate. Let’s take a look at how other countries celebrate this day of love! In Japan, Valentine’s Day is not a national holiday. But many people still celebrate it. Usually, women give sweet candy, chocolate or flowers to people they like. They call this chocolate ‘giri-choko.’ In Japanese, the word ‘giri’ means obligation, or, something someone must do. And ‘choko’ is a short form of the word for chocolate. A woman may also give ‘honmei-choko’ to a person she loves or is in a relationship with. Or she can give ‘tomo-choko’ to her friends. On March 14 the men return the acts! Men may give chocolates or other small gifts to women who gave them chocolate. In Finland, people celebrate ‘Friend’s Day’ on February 14. This is not only a day for lovers. But, it is a day for celebrating and remembering your friends. Some places do not celebrate Valentine’s Day at all. But they do celebrate a different day for love. People living in Brazil celebrate ‘Boyfriend or Girlfriend Day.’ On June 12, couples exchange gifts like chocolates, cards, flowers, and even special clothes. Some women even use this day to perform special customs. They believe these customs will help them find a good boyfriend or husband. Colombians celebrate ‘Love and Friendship Day’ on the 3rd Friday and Saturday in September. And many groups of people join in a popular tradition called ‘amigo secreto’ or ‘secret friend.’ Each member of the group chooses another member’s name by chance. He gives the person he chose a gift on this day. So, people in different places celebrate Valentine’s Day a little differently. They may celebrate it at a different time of the year. They may give gifts or greeting cards. They may write a special note to many people or to only one person. But there is a common idea in all of these actions. Valentine’s Day is a time to think about the people around you. It is a time to think about the people you love. It is a time to think about how these people influence your life - how they make it better. How do you feel when someone says ‘I love you’ to you? It is important for people to feel loved. But often, we do not express our love for the people around us. So, Valentine’s Day offers you the perfect chance to tell a person how much you value them. Tell your wife how much you love her. Tell your parents or children how wonderful they are. Tell your friends how much you like to see them. Sharing our love with people is a very good thing to do. Christians believe that no other person can show as much love as God. In fact, they believe that God is love! And the Bible says that it is important for people to show their love for one another. It says: “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.” At Spotlight, we encourage you to share your love for other people this Valentine’s Day. Family, friends, and lovers are all important in our lives. They should know how much we love them. Liz Waid wrote and produced this program. Hear more Spotlight programs on our website at www.radioenglish.net. This program is called “Valentines Day - All About Love.” How do you celebrate Valentine’s Day? Tell us in an e-mail (radio@radioenglish.net). Goodbye!