

Shillelagh Sentinel

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Feabhra

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Message from the President

Brothers,

Happy St. Valentine's Day to all,

I am sorry to drag you away from your loved ones to meet on this day dedicated to love, but then there is the actual history of the day. You might be surprised by some of what I am about to tell you of this iconic "holiday".

There are actually three St. Valentines that are recognized by the Catholic Church, but all three were martyred (aren't we off to a great start?) The timing of the day seems to stretch back to pagan Rome and the feast of Lupercalia, which was a fertility festival that involved sacrificing a goat and a dog, dipping the goat skin in blood and then slapping young women and crops with the bloody strips. This was supposed to bring about fertility. There were a few other steps, but we will save those for another time. The Church for somewhat obvious reasons outlawed this particular festival, but the idea of fertility in the early spring seemed to stick.

By the Middle Ages, February 14th had been somehow selected as the start of the bird mating season, although how you would enforce this on birds is a little weak in the historical record. The first mention of written valentines is around 1400 and the oldest known Valentine still in existence was a poem written in 1415 by Charles Duke of Orleans to his wife while he was a prisoner in the Tower of London after being captured at the Battle of Agincourt. He later lost his head. Not a healthy place for Charles (still not going well is it?).

Now, well it is the holiday that we are familiar with. I hope that you got someone a card, took someone to dinner and gave someone chocolates. If they are not all the same person, I hope they don't find out, for your sake.

On to real business...

(President's message continued on page 2)

"Never, never was their country so utterly downcast...

Yet I do not, could not despair of her regeneration. Nations do not die in a day. Their lives are reckoned by generations, and they encompass centuries. Their vitality is inextinguishable. Their sufferings are sometimes terrible, but they survive the deadliest plagues, the red inundation of the battle-field, the storms which topples towers and pyramids, the fire in which millions of wealth is melted down, the earthquake which engulfs cities and buries a whole people in one indistinguishable sepulchre-they have been known to survive all. Greece has so outlived her ruins and her woes. Italy has so outlived her degeneracy and her despotisms.

Thus too, shall Ireland survive all her sufferings, her errors, and disasters, and rear one day an Arch of Triumph' high above the wreck and wilderness of the past. This is my sincere faith. It is this which elates me at this moment-it is this which in my weary exile will make me forget my solitude, forget my privations, forget all the happiness I have sacrificed, and change what would otherwise be a weary bondage into a tranquil, happy dream."

Thomas Francis Meagher

AOH Retreat

Once again, our Hibernian Brothers will journey to the top of the continental divide for our annual pre-Lenten retreat. The annual trip to the mountains will be on Saturday, February 18th at Brother Jack Ward's lovely chateau on Mullen Pass road. The spiritual day will begin at 9:00 a.m., after coffee and bakery goodies. Led by our generous Brother Gabe Brennan, we will spend the winter day in prayer, song, scripture, and discussion of our Celtic spirituality.

This is one experience that should not be missed. It's a great opportunity to be with Hibernian brothers to think not only about our Christian faith, but to do it in connection with our Celtic heritage. It's the Celtic nature to see God in nature. What better way to spend the day in pray than to be surrounded by the peace and tranquility of the mountains. You can almost hear our Celtic ancestors speaking to us.

Please make the effort to attend, you'll not regret it. Ask anyone who has been there.

We also send an invitation to our Brothers in Butte, Anaconda, and Great Falls to join us, just let us know you're coming.

We usually carpool so let Jack Ward or Tom Pahut know if you want a ride.♣

St. Patrick's Day Festivities 2023

Saturday, March 11th

- ♣ ANNUAL ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE
12 noon ~ Downtown Helena

Friday, March 17th

- ♣ ANNUAL IRISH FLAG RAISING
8 am ~ Front of State Capitol
- ♣ ANNUAL CAPITOL ROTUNDA CELEBRATION
8:15 am ~ Capitol Rotunda
 - ♣ Official Proclamations
 - ♣ Tiernan Irish Dancers
- ♣ CATHOLIC MASS
12:00 pm ~ Cathedral of St. Helena

All Events sponsored by the
Helena Ancient Order of Hibernians
And Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians