**Guided Reflection – St Valentine**

**Teacher Notes**

This reflection could be used during week during or prior to St Valentine’s Day – 14th February. Not a huge amount is known about St Valentine, but his story has a couple of significant elements to it that can help generate thought and discussion about what it means to demonstrate love to one another. Most likely in a different and contrasting way to all the commercial advertising and products that we are bombarded with at that time of year.

**Explain to the children:**

**Slide 1:** Ask whether anyone has any thoughts about who this might be. When or if anyone suggests St Valentine then you can click to reveal the question asking who he was. St Valentine was a Christian priest (and possibly even a Bishop) who lived in Rome a couple of hundred years after Jesus’ was born.

**Slide 2:** You may recognise this as a photograph of part of the Colosseum in Rome. Ask the children if they know what that building was used for by the Romans – Entertainment: like our modern stadia, but very different types of entertainment! For example, gladiator fights and re-enactments of famous battles. Sadly, one from of entertainment involved killing people and Christians at that time were persecuted by the Romans so were amongst those to lose their lives in the arena.

Valentine spent much of his time, risking his own life, ministering (praying for and caring for) to the condemned prisoners and their families.

**Slide 3:**Ask the children if they have ever been to a church wedding. What was the service and day like? The service is a very happy and joyful one; also, one that makes the importance of love and commitment in a marriage very clear in the promises that the bride and groom make to each other. During the times of St Valentine, it was illegal for Christians to marry each other but Valentine, again risking his own life and freedom, conducted Christian weddings in order for couple to make their commitment to each other in the presence of God and their families and friends.

**Slide 4:** Valentine had become a popular figure for the work he had been doing and it was also reported that he was responsible for miracles of healing. This was brought to the Emperor’s (Claudius II) attention and when they met the Emperor to a liking to Valentine’s character. However, when Valentine tried to persuade the Emperor to embrace Christianity he was met with hostility and was consequently sentenced to death – he was martyred (which means losing your life for God) on 14th February and has been remembered on St Valentine’s Day ever since.

****What do we do to celebrate St Valentine’s Day? Lot of things about the romantic element of love in relationships………and perhaps this reflects what St Valentine helped couples with by agreeing to marry them, even though he wasn’t supposed to. They were able to declare their love for each other and be united under God’s love in a Christian marriage. This is the most likely reason we celebrate love for each other on Valentine’s Day.

But you could argue that there were much more significant aspects of love that St Valentine demonstrated during his lifetime: **sacrifice, selflessness, kindness and compassion** – he put the well-being of others ahead of his own, he risked his life for the benefit of others and ultimately lost his life in pursuit of bringing God’s Kingdom to the people of Rome.

**Slide 5:** Ask the children, ‘How could you demonstrate some of these values - **sacrifice, selflessness, kindness and compassion** - during the week of Valentine’s Day? Set yourself some personal challenges.

**Closing prayer**

**Slide 6:** For our final prayer, you might like to close your eyes or think about the images on the screen and how they communicate some of the values we have thought about. And if you’d like to make it your prayer, you can say amen at the end.

We say a Valentine prayer for everyone

And ask the Lord above

To fill our hearts and bless our souls

With the precious gift of love.

We ask Him for sincere love

The kind that's meant to stay

Just like the generous love

He gives to those he meets each day.

We pray for love from family

And from every cherished friend

Then we ask the Lord to give us

His love that knows no end. Amen

