

Before we adopted the Latin name for our second month, Old English used much more vibrant names to describe the month now known as February. February was apparently known as Cabbage month however, the most common Old English name was Solmonath, which can be translated as Cake month, but actually, literally means “mud month.” From the state of our Wellington boots, from taking Mungo out for his daily walks recently, we can certainly attest to the accuracy of this name!!

Despite being the shortest month in the year, lots of things have happened in February throughout history. 100 years ago this year on 16<sup>th</sup> February, Harold Carter opened the sealed doorway to Tutankhamen’s tomb. 70 years ago, on 28<sup>th</sup> Feb 1953 that British scientists Francis Crick and James D Watson announced that they had discovered the double-helix structure of DNA. 50 years ago, on 8<sup>th</sup> Feb 1973 that the US Senate established a select committee to investigate the Watergate scandal. This led to US President Richard Nixon’s resignation in August 1974. But February is obviously best known for the celebration of Valentines Day.

Valentine’s Day reminds us of the importance of expressing our love to those close to us. But how can we go beyond simply offering flowers and a card? Jesus says: *‘A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another’* (John 13:34). How can we express love like Jesus in our everyday relationships to our partner, children, neighbours or work colleagues?

### *Listening*

We need to listen to others, just as Jesus did. He asked questions of people and waited for them to process their answer. According to James, *‘everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry’* (James 1:19). How well do we listen to others? How often do we find ourselves already thinking of what we want to say before somebody’s finished speaking? Listening takes time; don’t rush it!

### *Touching*

Jesus reached out to touch the untouchables in His world, including lepers, the sick and children. This was completely out of character for rabbis of His day. For us today, a warm handshake may be of value. Of course, it should always be an *appropriate* touch – helpful for the other person, not just for ourselves.

### *Speaking*

Jesus’ conversation was always full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Do we speak words of *grace*, by offering comfort, giving encouragement or expressing care and concern? However, we should also be ready to speak words of *truth*, in asking for forgiveness, seeking reconciliation or addressing conflict. As Paul urges us, don’t avoid: *‘speaking the truth in love’*.

Where is the challenge for us in expressing love this Valentine’s Day?

With many blessings

Fr David