

February 14, 2010
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God's Valentine

Happy Valentines Day! Did your loved one give you a Valentine this morning? Well, here is another Valentine for you:

On Valentine's Day, let's remember that Jesus is God's love letter to us; he is the *Word* made flesh. But also WE are God's love letter to the world – signed, sealed, delivered ... I'm yours! as the song goes.

Listen to that passage from 2 Corinthians again:

2 Corinthians 3: 2-3. "You yourselves are *our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody.* You show that *you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.*"

So If WE are God's love letter to the world, what are we saying?

Do you remember when you were elementary school children, how much fun Valentine's Day was? We all decorated shoe boxes with tissue paper and glitter, and these were our Valentine mailboxes. At home, we carefully pushed along perforations to remove the die-cut Valentines that came in boxed sets of 25. We laboriously wrote "love from Cathy", "be mine, from Susie," "I like you, Mike" and then we licked the always inadequate glue to seal the envelopes. On Valentine's Day we played games like, how many words can you make out of the word VALENTINE—not many! – , and we got to eat

a slab of tri-colored “Neopolitan” ice cream (whatever THAT was) while waiting to see what Cupid had delivered. Of course, our kind teachers made sure that every child received lots of Valentines. Sometimes you got a Valentine from someone you’d rather not have gotten one from – we all screamed when Chuck Costello, known as “the wolf” because of the way he pursued the girls around the playground, scribbled a Cupid note to us! But usually it was very fun, and everyone felt special. Then the PTA moms distributed to us all little boxes of candy hearts [HOLD UP BAG OF HEART CANDY] – called “conversation hearts” – in pastel colors with weird – VERY weird – sayings on them, and we went home, puzzling over what phrases like “Heart throb,” “Cat’s Pajamas,” “Sweet Thang” and “You humdinger” might mean.

We are *God’s Valentines* to the rest of creation. WE are God’s love letter to the world. He tells us that: “YOU YOURSELVES are our letter ... written on human hearts.”

In fact, a great deal of Scripture bears a similar Valentine sentiment. For instance, Isaiah says, “You are precious and honored in my sight, and ... *I love you.*” Paul writes love letters to different churches, urging them not to lose heart and concluding by saying, “see with WHAT LARGE LETTERS I write to you” And Jesus encourages us: “Make my love complete ... *Love one another.*” And, as 2 Corinthians told us today, *because we are God’s valentine to the world, we are constantly being transformed and we do not lose heart* in sharing this message of love.

The televangelist Charles Swindoll is fond of saying that YOU may be the only Scripture your neighbor reads all week. It’s an awesome responsibility.

Now, about those Conversation Hearts. Randy will tell you that I am a firm

believer in eating a chocolate a day, because it's good for my soul. Similarly, I think these conversation hearts are a vehicle for spirituality. Listen to how this whole custom got started: at the turn of the century, a young immigrant from Eastern Europe moved his family to Chicago. He began a candy business there and, later, at the height of the Depression, he conceived of the idea of conversation hearts to get people to talk about something other than their sadness and despair. Conversation hearts were inexpensive, colorful, and sparked conversation! All sorts of parlor games and pastimes grew up around conversation hearts. Girls would giggle over them; young men would slip a few in the pocket or purse of the girl they were courting; mothers would pack a few in their child's lunch box. Because they were affordable, conversation hearts sold well, and took root in our culture's heart. Mr. Brach, their creator, wanted this candy to be available to ALL. And he allowed customers to mix and match – so that everyone, each in his or her own way, could taste and see that they were good. *Sounds like Grace to me!* And he was the inventor of the first large display case for candy, so that he could proudly show his hearts to the world. *May we do the same!*

Now, if WE are God's love letters to the world, what are we saying? What is stamped on those tiny crayon-colored Valentine hearts? What does *your* heart want to say to the world? "Be mine?" "Be *HIS*?"

Think about it. Be a conversation heart. Start a conversation with your heart, from God's heart.

God loves you. God loves THROUGH you. Happy Valentine's Day! *Amen.* +

[pass out Brach's Conversation Heart candy at the exchange of the Peace]

