

It's THAT time again. Seems like we just can't shake it. Is there any other "Special" day, other than Valentine's Day, that brings so much anxiety and feelings of worthlessness? All answers seem to be, "Spend more money." It was bad enough when we didn't have a clue as to even how to proceed so we just followed the crowd and hints from those who claimed to have some idea as to what to do. Surprises were always in the mix and dread the only surety in any plan. But after all these years (centuries?) the big question still remains, "How do we make, uh, I mean 'get,' someone to love you?" Well, forget that and just think first of how do you get them to like you? Okay. Okay. First things first. How do you get them to even acknowledge that you exist?

I'm guessing that many of you, if not all of you, had the same experience I had in the lower grades of school where we, as an assignment, made a hanging folder, decorated free style of course, and taped it to our desks so that on Valentine's Day each student would drop a Valentine into the folder as we walked up and down the desk rows. This was strictly supervised and the teacher made sure that each of us had a Valentine for each of the other students and no gross or hurtful things were said. Even so, when we went back to our desks and spilled out our folders there would be heard the "Eww! I don't want anything from that Bozo in my stuff."

Well, going from a formal setting that was essentially forced integration into this system of acknowledging each other didn't get any easier once we were out on our own. The crass commercialization made sure that only the big corporations came out winners. HALLMARK comes to mind. With a wide selection of topics in the greeting cards from highly comical to very, v-e-r-y, serious all you need to do is say, "I'll buy that," and sign your name. It becomes obvious that the "Follow the Crowd" and "Take the Path of Least Resistance" course of action are as uncertain as everything else. At least over time you get farther away from a juvenile chorus of, "(something, something)... First comes love, then comes marriage...(something, something)... something about - a baby carriage."

Starting with our own experiences and informed observance of these processes it is not too out of scope to take a leap beyond our world view and consider the plight of God Himself. Although He is far above and beyond feelings of uncertainty and doubt there still exists the great task of declaring His love for us. I hope it is apparent to all here that God does love us and has done nothing but what would be in our best interest. He has demonstrated over and over again that we are the object of His affection.

Make no mistake in what has been done. We are here because of the actions of God's wooing us to Him. This is most famously reported to us by Christ Himself as recorded by the Apostle John in the third chapter of his gospel. John 3: 14-17:

14) "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;

15) so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

16) For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

17) For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him."

These words are a beloved Valentine's address to all of us. Most hear them and feel uplifted and loved. Some actually respond and want to belong to Christ. They understand that a great service and great demonstration of love has been done for them. They are all for, all in, on the idea of announcing the love they received, the love they feel, but don't know why they should continue to lift up Christ as the source of getting that love and spreading that love. They substitute the Spirit for Christ and think their own feelings are the substance of their response. You know that there is a, "Eww. I don't want to eat with that Bozo," as reason to skip altogether the plea of Christ that we come together to take the loaf and to take the cup in remembrance of Him. The Lord's Supper is offered as the Lord commanded and it is up to the individual as to the relationship that is entered into by partaking. It is an act of love first demonstrated by God Himself and our loving response. It is not forced integration but a free loving response.

I would like to take this occasion of Valentine's Day to present something that is very near and dear to me. A communication that has been as long as I can remember, what I see as perhaps the greatest Valentine's Love

Note written to us by our Heavenly Father. It has been a staple in my life and a comfort that came from the effort to memorize it as a little child. It is in the 23rd Psalm that we see the story of our life in God's realm. Forgive my comfort and joy in the King James language that continues with me.

- 1) The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
- 2) He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.
- 3) He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name sake.
- 4) Yea, though I walk through the the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.
- 5) Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
- 6) Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

In Christ  
DeMilt Morse