

From the Pastor: Being Valentine

I subscribe to something called Mikey's Funnies. Each day I'm sent a "funny," some are truly amusing, some profound and some somehow sad. A couple of years ago at this time, Bishop Mike sent out something from Dr. Michael Halleen on "Being Valentine." Let me share:

"When I found the one my heart loves, I held on and would not let go..." (Song of Songs 3:4)

Another Valentine's Day... No doubt the usual enormous quantity of cards, flowers and candy (will be) bought and exchanged. It is said that only Christmas exceeds Valentine's Day in the number of holiday cards sent.

The true identity of Saint Valentine is not known. One legend holds that he was a kindly priest of the third century who continued to perform marriages despite an imperial ban. It seems that the Roman Emperor Claudius was upset at the number of men who refused to serve in his army because of their desire to stay home with their wives, so he outlawed marriage. And Fr. Valentine was beheaded for his trouble. Another tale tells of a medieval monk named Valentine who carried messages back and forth between men in prison and their loved ones. Many stories attach to this holiday, but the fact is we don't know about St. Valentine.

But we know about love. We know how wonderful it is — and sometimes how disappointing. We know how naturally it comes to us — and how difficult it can often be. We know how much we want it — and what risks it may carry. I asked a friend who had spent his career as a general surgeon what the most difficult kind of surgery had been for him. "Fixing hearts," he said, "because I know the cost of failure." He could as well have been describing love.

There is risk in giving love and risk in receiving it. Often the kids in orphanages where I've shared in ministry stand back when we arrive. They have had their hearts broken before, being abandoned by those they loved, and they don't know if they want to go there again. One can hear the fear in their voices when they ask if we're coming back to see them again, can feel it in the tightness of that last hug as we board our bus to leave. Yet love we must. It's a risk we have to take for life to be healthy and full. The title alone of psychologist Smiley Blanton's book gives the whole picture: "Love or Perish."

So love. Love God with all your heart. Take the chance on what that might mean for you. Love your neighbor — and your spouse and your parents and your kids — in the same measure as you do yourself. Valentine's Day (will pass), but today is still a time, as Solomon said, to hold them and not let them go.

Good advice for this month, (and for every month), especially this year, with Ash Wednesday being February 14th. God loves us with an incredible love and his name is Jesus. On February 14th we begin our walk with Christ to the cross, pausing often to say 'Thank you, Jesus.'

So, celebrate Love. Love God and those around you. Put your faith, your love into action. share the gift and the blessings will flow. It's a God thing. Pastor Karen

PS. Here's one of the amusing "funnies": I asked my nephew whether he bought his wife anything for Valentine's Day. "Yes", he said, "I bought her a belt and a bag." "That was very nice of you", I replied, "I hope she appreciated the thought." He said, "So do I, and hopefully the vacuum cleaner will work better now."

Just have to smile....

