

Sermon – Saturday, November 13, 2021

Deacon Martha

Do you remember exchanging Valentines in grade school? Maybe you went to Woolworths or WT Grant and your mom and dad bought a box of cards that you took home and sifted through, finding the right one to give to each classmate; names printed in your own script on the colorful, silly cards. For those too young to remember these stores, maybe it was Hills or Ames... or, you might have been creative and made your own using construction paper and lace, crayons and markers. Then, perhaps some years down the road, there was a special someone who caught your attention and a one and only sentimental exchange was done.

Many say Valentine's Day is just a "Hallmark" trick to encourage and guilt people into spending ridiculous sums of money to prove their undying love for another. I guess statistics show that expenditures are excessive...this is the materialistic worldview...

So, what about our Creator's personalized "Valentine" delivered to each of us? Hebrews 10:16 says,

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says, the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." Given thought, might this covenant be to each of us, a personal, Spirit-inspired love note that envelops you and me, encourages and inspires each of us, bringing us to the delight of knowing the immense and unending love of God despite our human failings? Subsequent verses give assurance.

"And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds," follows. A couple of weeks ago, Pastor Randi, in her sermon, explained the different kinds of love. Agape love is, I believe, what follows as we encounter a personal relationship with Jesus, open us to the presence of the Holy Spirit, always present, but not always overtly intrusive, and to cherish ourselves and one another, in humility and gratitude as beloved children and siblings.

Substitute the word Provoke with stimulate, or in Latin, provocare, "to call forth". Each one of us has been endowed with a gift or gifts that are meant to be shared, and in my estimation, used for the common good. With this in mind, I'd like to share with you some of a meditation from Richard Rohr, called The Goodness of Solidarity, in which he highlights the love and ministry of 20th century Catholic worker, Dorothy Day. He says of Dorothy, "She served the poor, homeless, and hungry in New York City for decades. Her steadfast belief in the dignity of the poor as bearing the presence of Christ inspired her persistent action, manifest as both charity and justice. When asked to address the question: "How can you see Christ in people?" This is my line of thinking... visit of our Baptismal Covenant: Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?" What is your response? Dorothy responds to the question about seeing Christ in people: "and we only say: It is an act of faith, constantly repeated. It is an act of love, resulting from an act of faith. It is an act of hope, that we can awaken these same acts in their hearts, too, with the help of God, and the Works of Mercy, which you, our readers, help us to do, day in and day out over the years..."

Provoking one another to love and good deeds doesn't happen by maintaining structures of large stones and large buildings. These may be compared to empires, businesses, the rich,

powerful, greedy enterprises who make their wealth at the expense of the poor and lowly, the common person, without regard for the common good. Neither does the Kingdom of God exist by empowering the external landscapes of the institutions that threaten “the Way of Love”. With hearts of compassion, a willingness and courage to care for the forgotten people, places and species, standing up for what is right, advocating for the oppressed, these are the responses that help us realize the dream of God, by helping to create the kingdom here and now and to promote the kingdom yet to come. Each of us, in our own way and by encouraging others to love and good deeds, responds to the Valentine of love that our Creator has put on our heart and in our mind.
Amen.