

Dear friends,

February has holidays and holy days. Groundhog Day supposedly will tell us how soon spring will come. President's Day reminds us of the birthday of two of our greatest Presidents, Abraham Lincoln and George Washington. This is also a Leap Year with a 29<sup>th</sup> day of February. Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, will be on February 22<sup>nd</sup> this year. It begins our journey to the cross and the empty tomb. Valentine's Day, always February 14<sup>th</sup>, is all about celebrating love. It is a holiday and at the same time it is a holy day because human love is based on God's love made known to us in Jesus Christ.

The Bible has several memorable verses about love:

***"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*** <sup>John 3:16</sup>

*And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. **God is love.** Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. <sup>17</sup> In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. <sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. <sup>I John 4:16-18</sup>*

*And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But **the greatest of these is love.*** <sup>I Corinthians 13:13</sup>

Here is an example of how love triumphs over life's adversities:

FORGET ME NOT by Grayce Bonahm Confer, Redlands, California

*Harold, my husband, has Alzheimer's disease. At first it was little things I noticed: not buttoning his shirt properly or forgetting to zip his trousers. Then there were bigger lapses of memory. He'd start a sentence and then look at me, not knowing what he was going to say. He'd look at television and then walk around behind it, trying to figure out how the person there got into the room. -*

*All of these things were painful to see, but for me the worst was watching Harold slip further and further away. How I yearned for the wonderful, caring Harold of old. How I begged God to let me feel my husband's love again.*

*On February 14 I went to pick up Harold at the local adult day-care center where it had been arranged for him to go each day. A nurse handed me a folded square of construction paper. The group, she told me, had spent the afternoon in crafts making valentines. "Your husband made this," the nurse said, "I think it's for you."*

*The Valentine was bordered with gray lace on the edges and a large red heart set in the center, surrounded by frilly white paper doilies. A bow of red yarn adorned one corner.*

*"It's beautiful, darling," I said to Harold. Then I opened the fold of the Valentine. There was a jumble of red crayoned jiggly marks inside. The vaguest sort of chicken scratching. At first the marks seemed meaningless to me, but I looked closer. They were words; Ich liebe dich. .. German words, and I knew what they meant.*

*I'd known those words for 50 years, ever since our courting days at the University of Illinois. Harold had always ended his little notes the same way: ich liebe dich besten, für Ewigkeit und Ewigkeit. (I love you best, forever and forever.) It was the most beautiful Valentine I had ever received. He loved me then. And this I knew: He loved me still.*

Take time to tell God you love Him and thank Him for His love to you.

Love in Christ,