



A hymn for Him

This year, St. Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday converge on February 14th. At first, they seem worlds apart — ashes and penance versus chocolate and roses. Yet, upon reflection, the two may be more connected than we think. One of the fundamental texts for Lent is from the Prophet Ezekiel, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh," Ez36:26. Lent is about conversion, 'a change of heart,' acquiring a new heart. Whereas the traditions around St. Valentine's Day are relatively simple, a card, sometimes anonymous, flowers, and chocolates to express love and affection, Lent brings with it the annual dilemma: What will I do for Lent this year?

Here's a suggestion: send God a valentine each of the 40 days of Lent. Pause, daily, to express your love, affection, and admiration to the Divine Beloved, as Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection recommends in the Practice of the Presence of God. Then, as part of your Lenten discipline, reflect on God's valentine to you each day. If we're awake and aware, we'll see how God sends us numerous expressions of love — cards, chocolates, roses — often anonymously, for the Beloved knows us intimately and has counted every hair on our head. Matt 10:26.

Finally, as I think this Lenten observance has three parts, give a daily valentine to someone during the 40 days of Lent — a smile, kindness, a helping hand, a text or phone call. Perhaps evening prayer, for Lent, could be looking back and recognizing God's valentine while recalling your valentines of the day. May this "valentine Lent," prepare us so when Easter arrives, our hearts will be softer and ready for Resurrection.

Blessings,

Michael

P.S. I remember my father having a bit of a spiritual breakthrough when it dawned on him that most love songs (he loved to sing) could also be addressed to God. It called them "Hymns for Him." So here is a "Hymn for Him" by e.e. cummings — us praying it to God and God repeating it to us.

[i carry your heart with me(i carry it in]

i carry your heart with me(i carry it in
my heart)i am never without it(anywhere
i go you go,my dear;and whatever is done
by only me is your doing,my darling)

i fear
no fate(for you are my fate,my sweet)i want
no world(for beautiful you are my world,my true)
and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant
and whatever a sun will always sing is you

here is the deepest secret nobody knows
(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life;which grows
higher than soul can hope or mind can hide)
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

i carry your heart(i carry it in my heart)

E.E. CUMMINGS, *Complete Poems: 1904-1962*

Levante 3 Online Video Retreats
FEBRUARY 15-21 • MARCH 21-27

Levante 3 information:
<https://hermitfish.com/levante3-schedule>

Levante 2 Online Video Retreats
FEBRUARY 8-14 • MARCH 14-20

Levante 2 information:
<https://hermitfish.com/levante-2-schedule>

Levante 1 Online Video Retreats
FEBRUARY 1-7 • MARCH 7-13

Levante 1 information:
<https://hermitfish.com/levante-1-retreat-houses>

Michael News

Fr. Ignatius Tully was elected Prior of New Camaldoli on Friday, 12 January. He will now begin a visitation of the houses and meet with each monk.

Because of Michael's community commitments, *Levante 4* is a little behind schedule, but work has resumed.

Beginning February 14th, with the help of Laura, Michael is making a 'text a day' available during each day of Lent. The quotes will be on the theme of "a Valentine Lent." They will be posted on hermitfish.com under the *Lectio* tab. Visit:

<https://hermitfish.com/daily-quotes-for-lent-2024>

Catch up on 'Levante'

While *Levante 4* is in the works, the *Levante 1, 2* and *3* video retreats are available. Many thanks to those who have participated so far. For information on all upcoming retreat dates visit:

<https://hermitfish.com/retreat-brochure>

Audio Subscriptions

Michael's entire audio retreat library is available online 24/7, via subscription. If you need assistance subscribing, managing your subscription, or accessing the recordings, please contact laura@hermitfish.com. Visit:

<https://hermitfish.com/about-the-audio-library>

Grateful for your support

Michael wishes to thank everyone for your continued prayers, good wishes and support this past year. Donations to Hermit Fish, Michael's 501(c)(3) nonprofit, are fully tax deductible. Gifts of any size are greatly appreciated. FID: 82-2489475

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Creative and logistical support for Michael, his *Buen Camino* newsletter and HermitFish.com website are provided by Enigma | LA, enigmala.com

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