Happy St. Valentine's Day -- named after a priest or bishop, maybe, one of 14 or so, and quizzically, too, there having been no official allowances made for any holy man to hand over his heart of hearts to any live being on this Earth. In any event, please have a heart, *will ya*, so we can all take a breath and just
share the love
for a bit.

We would do just as well to wish ourselves hearts bearing the full resources that the *valens* name bestows:
worthy, strong, powerful.
We may need them, these traits, where we're all headed. God knows we can use all the love we can muster and gather down here, on this cuckoo and confused orb we're all riding, guided and steered by crazy-clever primates, "
Planet of the Apes"
indeed, and in spades.

Now, we must make share with you our heart's desires, and make loving intervention, plead with you -- in our care and concern for you, our brothers and sisters -- and, in honor of this day, ask you to at the least, hear us out. It is, after all, a fine day to *have a heart*.

Funnily said, so you won't get angry right off, please stop putting your peanut butter on our chocolate -- we'll do our best to keep our chocolate out of your peanut butter, OK?

Less sweetly said, but with just as much heart, please keep your religion out of all our public lives, the ones financed *by* all of us, *for* all us -- you know, *no matter what race, color, religion, or creed.* Fair's fair: Public life
belongs to all of us, so please stop trying to co-opt it all.

The Founders made no official religion on these new shores, and purposefully so, showing no religion any favor. Instead, they built a separation of church from the state, keeping the sacred and secular apart. Stop trying to undo that. Please leave that alone.

What you believe on your own time is just fine, it's all up to you! But, please, have a heart: When you're out here in public, you're on our time, you're on our dime, not just your own.

Please know that, as Derrick Jensen* wrote, "... reality trumps all belief systems: what you believe is not nearly so important as what is real."

If you will please stop coming to our doors, repeatedly and earnestly trying to convince us your beliefs are all true, we promise to not hound you with the Good News that we're all freed from fanciful hells, but that the Bad News is we're all free to make hells of our own, based on what we choose to actually do, and on what we select not to do.

The only difference between cults and religions is the number believing, you know. And, plenty of us are spiritual without being religious -- many of us think Religion has almost poisoned the whole concept of spirituality -- but we are spiritual just the same, and in ways you may never understand. Meanwhile, quite frankly, dear hearts, we resent the living hell out of your preaching to us inside our very own church, which for us, is this world, and this very life.

Please stop clubbing us with your dogma, and we'll not try to flay you with your karma. For example, you don't want a gay marriage? Well, fine with us -- please, don't have one!

You want to pray in school -- fine, go ahead, and do it silently, no one will stop you, so long as you do what you have been instructed to do by your sacred texts, praying to your Father in private -- each one praying silently, alone.**

You don't want an abortion? Great! Then you should not have one! It's your life, it's up to you! But, stop trying to decide for everyone else. Isn't it plain and obvious that anyone else's life is not about you, not for you to try to live, too? Do your own sacred texts not tell you this is so?

There's more you need to hear, and with love, we say it: Men, especially, have no place in the discussion, save for whatever role women, one at a time, may choose to grant each or any of them. As a freedom protestor's sign stated, *"No uterus? No vote!"* Do you get that?

With even more heart, now, as we get closer to religious bone, we all say: Get out from between a woman and her doctor on private health matters! You once howled about the trumped-up, fake possibility of "big government" getting in there, between us and our health care, but, now -- you want to insert your own self right there?

We say this with love, now -- look: Many things exist in this world. Not one of them requires you to "believe in" them in order for them to exist, live, or be. If you will please stop phrasing and framing your conversation that way, in what you choose to believe in or not, we will, in turn, stop insisting on the obvious -- that life already exists with you or without you, with or without your beliefs. It is simply so. Please -- take a look around!

And, by the way: If you insist on preaching politics inside your holy places, be ready for that tax exempt status to be ripped away for all those buildings, all that land, all that wealth. Because, then, you see, you'll be operating as we all really do, in the Real World, in the Public Domain.

You want to speak of this world, hey, we're all for it! Please, brush up on your facts, do some research, let's start using scientific methods and facts. Please stop being childish, and let's discuss things the way adults - even yours -- used to do, with reason and logic and facts.

Finally, and this pains our hearts to ask: How long since you've applied those famous Ten Commandments to your own lives, to anyone you would so eagerly hand your public vote? These laws in your sacred books, they minced no words at all, there were no shades of gray, no grading on a curve, they were all very specifically carved in stone. Or, are these laws from God just to apply to everyone else around you, and are never to apply directly to you?

If you promise to live each day thinking you will have to explain it to God each and every night, we have much room for conversation -- which is good, as there is so much good we can all still do down here, good to do for everyone, not just for a select few!

This is tough love, and it's very difficult to do -- but, there's no better day to do it than today, when the message is all about Love. If we are all going to move ourselves and our family and friends forward, we must start speaking with each other in ways we can all understand.

If we are to get out of these damnable life jams we are now all of us in, here, in The Year of Our Hysterical Mass Insanity, 2012, we must all now openly speak only of things we can all see, and hear, and know, and touch -- do so for our children, our grandchildren, and such.

If this Family of Humanity is to go forward, is to keep moving up and over this miserable rise of madness all around us, you must come forward too, as part of our group, as part of this family. Because you are a part of it - you are needed here, too.

Please know that we love you. We hope that some day, you will really know and accept this is true -- someday, we all hope you will understand.

** Derrick Jensen's piece, "A New Declaration," is available at The Occupied Wall Street Journal: http://occupiedmedia.us/2012/02/a-new-declaration/*

*** Various versions and translations of Matthew 6.6, regarding praying silently: http://bible.cc/matthew/6-6.htm*