



## **THE INVITATION (Children's Story)**

**April 9, 2022**

**Mariarosa Cavalieri, Director  
Sabbath School and Personal Ministries  
Italian Union, Inter-European Division**

**Bible Text: Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God (1 John 4:7, NKJV).**

Lucas is eight years old and lives with his family on a street with many houses. In one of these other houses, his cousin, Elisa, lives with their grandparents. Elisa is 12 years old. Despite the difference in their ages, Lucas and Elisa are always together. They know everyone in the neighborhood. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, they would meet to play with their neighbors' children at each other's homes. But since the pandemic, families have closed in on themselves a little.

Besides being neighbors, Lucas and Elisa are members of a small, Seventh-day Adventist church not far from where they live. The arrival of Covid, however, also interrupted the usual way of meeting. The seats in the church are limited and the time in which one can stay in church is shorter. Lucas and Elisa do not like wearing masks in church and they also dislike that events can no longer be organized as before. But it is necessary. Perhaps you too are experiencing a similar situation.

Lucas's parents used to write greeting cards to deliver to the neighbors on holidays or other special days. Along with the card, they included a Bible verse and a small, simple gift related to the occasion. Then, they would go around to the neighbors and deliver the cards, with joy and hope.

Because of the lockdown due to the pandemic, they were no longer able to visit like before. Lucas's mom said, "Guys, we have to find a way to continue this good habit. Let's come up with some ideas!" And so they did. Lucas's mother and grandmother made some cookies, and Elisa added a note in the card: "If you need to buy something or you need help, call us at this number ...". Some of the older neighbors very much appreciated this proposal!

When the lockdown eased, they continued to come up with ideas to continue this tradition of cards. Months passed and the pandemic continued. Everyone reorganized a bit and still found ideas to enjoy moments of celebration in the church. One day, the Sabbath School Department announced that it would soon be "Visitor's Day".

At home, Lucas asked: "What is Visitor's Day?"

“It’s a special day where you invite your friends to celebrate them,” his mother explained. “We want to tell them that Jesus loves them and that they are important to us.”

“Yes!! I love Mrs. Torres!” Lucas exclaimed, thinking of the nice and affectionate neighbor who lived two houses away.

His grandfather, reflecting, said: “After all, Visitor’s Day is a bit like a holiday to celebrate the love we have for each other. We tell someone that we love them and that we care about them. Remember when there were little hearts and chocolates everywhere? We could prepare a card that includes an invitation to come.”

Elisa understood her grandfather’s intentions. “Grandfather,” she said, “you mean to speak of the greatest love—God’s love—right? People seem to believe it less and less.”

And so, Elisa searched the Internet for some ideas inspired by other special days celebrated by people in general, with the intention of changing it for their own purpose. She chose a cardboard box in which to paste hearts and photos. For the photos, Lucas and Elisa wore T-shirts on which their grandmother had written a Bible text; with half of the verse on each T-shirt. Then, she and Lucas took a picture together. After that, Lucas’s dad printed many small copies of the photo.

Elisa next glued the photos inside the boxes. The phrase on the two T-shirts next to each other was “Love comes... /... from God” (1 John 4:7). They made 14 boxes, one for each family in the neighborhood. As you can imagine, there was work for everyone—Dad printed the invitations for Visitor’s Day, and Lucas folded them and put them in the box.

Then, they decided when they would deliver the boxes in the neighborhood. Who knows if people would even agree to come to Visitor’s Day? They made a circle and held hands while Lucas prayed. He was extremely hopeful. They had a good relationship with many of their neighbors. By opening the box and seeing him and Elisa in the picture, someone should accept the invitation. Lucas and Elisa couldn’t wait to see who would accept their invitation and come to church on Visitor’s Day.

If you want to see how to make a similar card as described in our story, look at <https://blog.pianetamamma.it/mammaacs/scatola-s-valentino-fai/>. It is possible to do something nice for our neighbors, even if we cannot purchase materials or make cards. With the gifts that God has given us, and with the things we already have in our homes, we can do something beautiful to help and support them. With friendship, trust will be born. And when we invite them to Visitor’s Day, they will feel that it is an invitation from true friends.

Let’s pray.