

Today's Advent Devotional is offered by Peter Covington

Shoeni Marroni—Part 2

Near me, in the park, along a major street was a roasted chestnut vender, which together with hundreds of others similar stands filled the city with the smell of toasted husks. The Swiss use the French/Italian word for chestnut: *Marroni* and added a German adjective for “beautiful,” so they were *shoeni marroni*, and they did, in fact smell beautiful.

But I had little money left, so I tried my best to write with my glove on or off, depending how legibly I wanted the result. One of my favorite cards was addressed to a guy, Gregoir, with whom I now think I was in love.

I had enough to send to most of the exchanges students whom I knew well and kept thinking about the joy they would feel at being remembered and receiving a little bit of love in a strange place, far from home. I took breaks to warm up my hands and my back side.

At one point, a short lady in a day dress and red frumpy coat came up to me, pointed to my work and said something to me in French. I responded in my limited French that I did not understand. Then she shuffled off



while I returned to my work in desperation to finish. A few minutes later I heard a crinkling by my side and a 100 gram bag of *shoeni marroni* appeared on the bench next to my work. I looked up and the small woman was there. I knew enough to say *Merci.*” I held the chestnuts in my hand in their paper wrapping and inhaled their fragrance deeply. Her eyes twinkled and she said in English “no you get cold”

It was too late for that, but the chestnuts revived my hands and her unexpected surprise warmed my heart to keep me going. I finished the chestnuts and my cards about the same time, pulled my self stiffly off the

bench and walked to the post office. I knew what joy would accompany each card and what a beautiful world God had created for us.