Here we are on a very cold day with Valentine's Day falling directly on a Sunday!

I rejoice in your presence at Liturgy this morning - for it shows your LOVE for Christ and Valentine's Day is all about love anyway.

Of course there is also flowers, candy, red hearts and romance. Isn't that what Valentine's day is all about? Well, maybe not.

The origin of this observance for the expression of love really isn't really romantic at all -- at least not in the traditional sense.

The historic root of this day is that of = "St. Valentine Day" - "He was a Roman Priest in the early 3rd century when Christianity was still in its formative years.

Polygamy was still practiced in Rome, which of course the Christian church was against, teaching that marriage was a sacred union that was manifested between one man and one woman.

The Roman emperor at the time was Claudius II who in fact persecuted the church. To make things even worse - he also had an edict that prohibited the marriage of young people.

This was based on the hypothesis that unmarried soldiers fought better than married soldiers, because married soldiers might be afraid to fully go into battle, worried of what might happen to their wives or families if they were killed.

And yet more and more young people were attracted to the Christian faith. Thus Fr Valentine encouraged young people to marry and he secretly married them, against the emperor's edict.

Valentine was eventually caught, imprisoned, tortured and beheaded for performing marriage ceremonies against the command of Emperor. The year was 270AD.

St Valentine sacrificed his life for the cause of Christ and His teachings on love and marriage and is honored as a martyr of the church.

Along the way...as the years have passed --- legends, fan-fare & commercialism have come into the observance of his commemoration and thus we get the red hearts, the cards, the chocolates and the like.
With the arrival of the 14th of February on a Sunday this year, our attention clearly focuses on love and marriage...to our spouse, or to a special sweetheart that someday may become our spouse.

There is a stress on card giving, perhaps flowers and chocolates; for many a dinner out (pre-covid). Many proposals for marriage are uttered by men towards their girlfriend actually.

In recent decades, I see a lot of advertisements about jewelry being connected to Valentine’s Day for people already married.

Nothing wrong with any of this...the intent being to express our love for our spouse in a more vivid way then the daily routine. Truth be said, sometimes we take it for granted and leave it unsaid. So, St Valentine’s Day helps us to refocus...to regroup! To choose love every day.

With this regrouping in mind, I wish to share with you today even briefly,

a few thoughts on love and marriage....

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First, we need to remember the obvious.....God is the “author” of marriage. In the very first book of the Bible, in Genesis 2:24, we read of the establishment of marriage.

“Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh.”

Marriage has the blessing of Almighty God upon it and is a sacred bond between a man and a woman.

In the Orthodox Marriage Sacrament - the Epistle Lesson is taken from St Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians, which contains a very noticeable phrase that often catches people off guard..... St Paul writes to wives & husbands

Be subject to one another, out of reverence to Christ-

Wives, be subject to your husband as to the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church.
Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her.

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In his article *Reflections on Ephesians 5:21-23*, Fr. Stanley Harakas discusses the sacrificial nature of the marital relationship as defined by St. Paul.

✓ He eloquently re-defines the popular notion of these verses, which are often miss-interpreted by the casual hearer thinking that the role of the husband’s headship as authoritarian and the wife’s obedience as one of servitude.

✓ The intent of the text is to indicate that the husband’s headship is to "imitate Christ’s love" and leadership over the Church.

✓ This headship is not to be understood as one that possesses worldly power and authority. It is a headship of sacrifice, of service and love based on the example that our Lord Himself gave us, as head of the Church.

The words = “Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:21), is key to understanding the rest of the text.

✓ The concept that is introduced here is mutuality in love between the husband and the wife as shown by self-sacrifice and obedience to one another - and together - by obedience to Christ:

✓ "Both husband and wife exercise authority over their spouse and both husband and wife obey each other."

✓ In the end, each spouse’s needs are met not by focusing on their own, but by concentrating on the welfare of the other!
✓

The word "love" is both a noun and a verb and as a verb we are called into action by "doing", by showing our love thru selfless sacrifice, both parties.
Beloved - How full of wonder and how glorious are God’s ways!

He is a God that continually loves us and sacrificed Himself for us and desires that we love each other as well sacrificially.

Ultimately, it is this self-less love for one another that leads both husband and wife toward loving God more and this is what makes marriage a vehicle for entering into communion with Him.

Yes Indeed - how glorious are God’s ways!

How Great is His Love – He, who is the Creator of Marriage!

Let us keep our marriages strong through sacrifice and humility!

St Valentine’s Day – a day to re-focus / re-dedicate as needed.

A Blessed Valentine’s Day!