

Listen to Love  
Fr. Joseph Allen  
Upbeat  
V. 4, n.2, 1971

We are reminded during the month of February of the great love-myth of St. Valentine's Day. The kind of love of which we are aware during this season is romantic love. The great movies and novels have always had such themes. Shakespeare wrote about it in *Romeo and Juliet* and Pasternak wrote about it in *Dr. Zhivago*. Every young man and woman has questions about this romantic love and the myths which express the great love stories of the ages appeal greatly to us. We all wonder: "Who will I finally marry? Who will I live my life with?" Myths are great educational processes inasmuch as they tell stories; in this way they are valuable and beautiful to man.

But there is a different kind of "myth" that we must also consider. The great myths which were mentioned above are *descriptive*; they describe love. The dangerous myth that we all face today is the prescriptive one; they prescribe, mostly inefficiently and incorrectly, what and how we are to love. But we must never forget that it is WE who only may determine what the "real" love is. They all tell us to "fall in love" but they cannot tell us just what love really is! They tell us to be a part of the "Pepsi generation," but it is we who will determine just what happens when the bottle is empty.

That's romantic love. And it is beautiful to us because it can be, when it is truthful, the beginning of a real "communion" with another human being. But there is another love, an ULTIMATE love, a love which gives form to all the other loves. It is a love, in fact, which connects the love between people to God. Few of us realize that the Orthodox wedding service speaks about this "particular" love as the prototype of the love that should exist between a man and woman. We are speaking now of the love of God for man, and that greatest measure of love is seen best in Christ's giving *His* life for the life of the world.

The common denominator between romantic love and the love of God to man is in SACRIFICE. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." So great was His love for us. Even in such a way does romantic love imply that we must be willing to sacrifice our lives for the one we marry. The great myths of the ages, when they speak of romantic love, perhaps hint at these terms of sacrifice and communion. The modern "myths," such as "things go better with Coke," or "Ultra-Brite gives your mouth sex-appeal," try to "prescribe" the process of "falling in love" incorrectly as the love which will last even up to the ripe old age. "Falling in love" and the quality of love itself may be connected and similar, but if we don't get to the latter stage, the real deep love, we will live only in the "reflection" of love. It is this great and lasting love of God which transcends all these myths. It is this love of God which is the real basis of all love.