



VOLUME 7, ISSUE 1

JANUARY – MARCH 2013

JONAH: WHEN ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD

BY H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III

Saint Paul the apostle said, “All things work together for good to those who love God.” (Romans 8:28) We have also learned this from the book of Jonah. Even the things that appear to be the source of toil and affliction work together for good. The great fish that swallowed Jonah was also the reason for a great blessing. It was a safe submarine that carried Jonah and brought him near the place of his service. This great fish was also able to teach Jonah to pray, for we find Jonah, who did not bow to God in the ship, praying inside the belly of the great fish, making vows to God, speaking faithfully, and leaving the great fish to carry out God's will which he had previously disobeyed.

Do not be afraid if you are the swallowed by a great fish one day. Perhaps this great fish has been sent to for you by God, Who has prepared it for your sake in order to grant you a special blessing. Therefore, remember the words of the Bible, “all things work together for good to those who love God.”

The waves that nearly overturned the ship worked for good. This tempestuous sea, great storm and clamorous, high waves all worked together for good. If it were not for this, the mariners would not have prayed, offered sacrifices or made vows. It guided them to believing. Likewise, the worm that ate the plant and grieved Jonah was working for good. It indeed deprived Jonah of the shade, who was struck by the heat of the sun and became faint, but this was for his own good. It was a reason that led to Jonah reproaching God, through which his soul was saved.

God is capable of utilizing everything for our own good. He utilized the betrayal of Judas, the envy of Annas and Caiaphas and the cowardice of Pilate, all to fulfill the great work of redemption. It is sufficient that God transforms any matter that falls into His Hands to good, even if the matter is evil. Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave, but God transformed this evil to good. What is important is that we believe in the goodness of God and His works, and His good intervention in matters. That is why the Bible did not only say, “all things work together for good”, but added, “to those who love God.”

Indeed, for those who love God, all things work together for them for good. All things do not work together for good for all people. Tribulations come to many people and they grumble, murmur, complain and blaspheme. However, when tribulation comes to a person who loves the Lord, he thinks: “What is the blessing that the Lord wishes for me from behind this tribulation?” In this way, all things work together for good for him. There is a beautiful, comforting verse at the beginning of the book of Genesis, at the end of the story of creation, in which the Divine Inspiration says: “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.” (Genesis 1:31) Even the great dragon on the land or in the sea, God saw as very good. We can see all things as beautiful with the vision of faith, love and simplicity. Do you think that the mother ape sees its child as being less beautiful than that of a gazelle? Not at all; but if he were transformed into a gazelle she would mourn over him. Sometimes we see matters as being troublesome, since the trouble is from within us. If we are sound from within, then we would be happy with everything, even with the great fish, which swallows us, and with the tempestuous sea, which almost overturns our ship. God even transformed Jonah's sin in his escape to good. Jonah boarded a ship and escaped from God, so God utilized this escape as a reason for the salvation of the mariners. In the same way, Jonah's stubbornness with God was transformed to good, and so Jonah came out of it with greater knowledge of God and His ways, and with greater maturity in his spiritual life and understanding. He learnt many spiritual lessons from the incidents of the ship, the great fish and the plant.

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UPCOMING RETREATS AT ST. MINA'S – 2013

Jan 31 – Feb 2

Group Retreat

Feb 21-23

College Retreat (Oakland University)

March 8-9

Retreat Commemorating H.H. Pope Kyrillos the VI

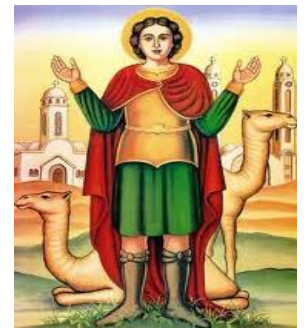
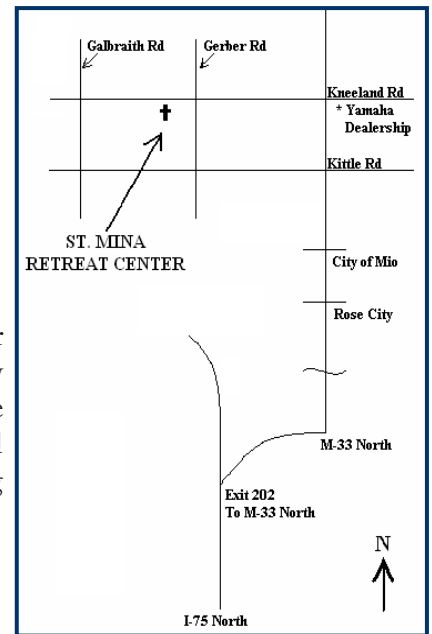
March 14-16

College Retreat (Wayne State University)

WHAT'S NEW AT ST. MINA'S RETREAT CENTER...

OPENING OF RETREAT BUILDING ~ OCTOBER 2012

On October 26, 2012, a large group of congregants assembled at St. Mina's Retreat Center to pray the Holy Liturgy and to celebrate the grand opening of a new building recently constructed at the retreat center. This new building has accommodation to receive around 70 participants and has facilities equipped with a large gathering area and full kitchen to support groups coming for spiritual retreats. We thank God for this blessing and invite everyone to come and enjoy the peaceful and blessed surrounding.



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