



VOLUME 6, ISSUE 2

GOD IS PRESENT

APRIL 2012 – JUNE 2012

BY H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III

You know that in every hardship I say three statements: "God is present," "Everything works for the good," and "It is destined to end." "God is present" means God sees, God hears, and God knows what is happening. God will handle it and act and will never leave matters the way they are... God is present everywhere, with everyone, and in every occasion. And we are used to seeing God's hand clearly in our life and in all that we face. When we say "God is present" we mean that He is the Preserver and the Supporter. We always chant a phrase from the psalm "The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in, from this time forth, and even forevermore." (Ps. 121). It is a phrase that the guardian angel says to every human while he prays. Or the praying person repeats this to himself to comfort himself, calm down and assure himself. We believe that God saves us from the devil, from sins and from tribulations. He saved St. Athanasius when he was exiled four times, saved St. John in his exile on the Island of Patmos and appeared to him and showed him many visions. Even the children, He says about them in the psalm: "The LORD preserves the simple" (Ps. 116:6). We also will get very troubled if we forget that God is present and He preserves us. In the phrase "God is present" we remember that God is the One taking care of all. He said: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Mt. 11:28).

+Thus, the Bible says: "Cast your burden on the LORD, And He shall sustain you" (Ps 55:22) and the psalm says: "May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble" (Ps. 20:1). Yes, God, in whom we believe, has a great characteristic that is he is "the Comforter of the troubled" so "Wait on the LORD; Be of good courage, And He shall strengthen your heart; Wait, I say, on the LORD!" (Ps 27:14) for God is the one caring for all. He even takes care of animals and birds, even the worm that moves beneath a stone... "He gives to the beast its food, And to the young ravens that cry" (Ps 147:9)—even the birds of the air who neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns "your heavenly Father feeds them" (Mt. 6:26). He also says about the sparrows: "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will." (Mt. 10:29). And after this He says: "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." God took care of animals and birds in Noah's Ark and took care of Noah along with animals and beasts. He also took care of butterflies and gave them beautiful colors. "Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Mt. 6:29). And He took care of singing birds and gave them beautiful voices without them asking Him for it. He took care of the bee and gave it the art of making honey and organizing its work. He cared for the peacock and gave it beauty in its feathers. If it was so with animals and birds, then He cared for the humans much more!

+If God is so in His kindness, then why does He allow trials to come? God allows trials to come because of their benefits. Among the benefits of trials is that when a trial come upon us we start checking ourselves from inside for each to settle an account with oneself, and reconcile with God if we were far from Him. And in trials, we see that people in their fasts, prayers and taking communion were reconciling with God so that they ask Him without shame. This is according to the Lord's saying: "Return to Me, and I will return to you" (Mal 3:7).

+ Among the benefits of trials is that they reveal things to us and give us a clearer vision. As the poet says: "May God bless tribulations, by them I distinguished my enemy from my friend."

+ Also among the benefits of trials is that through them we see God's hand working with us and with others. In trials we gain a spiritual experience by which we see that God is present. We, brothers, practically recognize God and His work, not through theology books or doctrine books but in our whole life path. We do not only believe in God about whom the books talk, but we believe more in God who we see in our life exactly if He is present in front of us. And we see how He works and we admire His power and wisdom. God is blessed in all His work with us...

+ Through trials we then gain spiritual experience with God and the events. It is a school that we call the school of trials, A spiritual school. And every person going through trials grows in knowledge, wisdom and experience. And goes into a training on how to deal with matters and see how they are solved in front of him.

+ And in trials we see the verse saying: "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible" (Mk 10:27). And when we meditate in trials. We see that they are all for the good. As the Bible says: "all things work together for good to those who love God" (Rom. 8:28). And trials, my brothers, are not a type of abandonment because they come with help. The trial is always in the bounds of our capabilities to bear it. It also comes with an outcome as the bible says: "but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. 10:13).

+ Therefore, we ask God to handle the remaining matters. And we hope that He solves them...

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UPCOMING RETREATS AT ST. MINA'S – 2012

May 14-16

Individual Retreat

May 31 – June 2

Group Retreat

June 11 – 13

Individual Retreat

June 22

Feast of the Consecration of the 1st Church of St. Mina

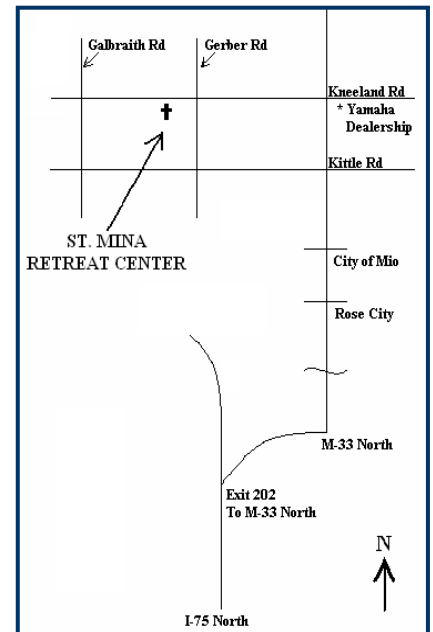
WHAT'S NEW AT ST. MINA'S RETREAT CENTER....

COMMEMORATION OF THE FEAST OF POPE KYRILLOS VI

MARCH 8- 9, 2012

A large group gathered at St. Mina's Retreat Center to commemorate the Feast of Pope Kyrillos VI. On the Eve of the Feast, the Raising of Incense was prayed followed by Midnight Praise. The next morning, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated.

The group enjoyed a time of spiritual fellowship. The life of our beloved Pope Kyrillos VI shows us the example of living in communion with God even while living in the modern world and we see the fruits of the virtues of unceasing prayer, humility and love of service. May Pope Kyrillos' prayers be with us always.



OTHER NEWS...

A new building is under construction at St. Mina's Retreat Center. We seek your prayers for the completion of this project and also offer you the chance to share in the in the blessing of finishing this wonderful effort. A DVD is available commemorating all the events at the St. Mina Retreat Center and is available at the fundraising table in St. Mary's church.

If you know anyone who is not currently receiving this newsletter and would like to receive it, please send their information to info@stminaretreatcenter.org