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**THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY: ICON OF LIFE OF SERENITY**

**By H.G. BISHOP SERAPION**

St. Mary is a treasure of virtues. In her life we see an example of strong faith and a life of submission. She is also the model of purity and holiness, for she is the Virgin and the Mother. I would like to contemplate with you in the virtue of silence in the life of St. Mary. Indeed, the Holy Virgin Mary is the Icon of life of Serenity. St. Mary witnessed the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ and, for many years, saw the miracles and heard the teachings of her Son and God. Despite this, the words she uttered that were kept for us are few.

1. The Gospel according to St. Luke documents for us the visit of the Archangel Gabriel to St. Mary. When she heard the greetings of the Angel, the Gospel says, *"But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was"* (Luke 1:29). Did St. Mary say that in her mind only? Did God reveal to the Archangel what was on her mind or did she express what was on her mind in words? In either case, St. Mary's reaction was an expression of her humility and her feeling of being unworthy. When the Archangel announced to her that she will be the Mother of the Son of God, she asked, *"How can this be, since I do not know a man?"* (Luke 1:34). And when she heard the explanation of the Archangel, which concluded by saying *"For with God nothing will be impossible"* (Luke 1:37), she responded with her everlasting statement, *"Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word"* (Luke 1:38).

2. While the Virgin St. Mary was visiting St. Elizabeth, she uttered her famous praise mentioned in the Gospel according to St. Luke, *"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior"* (Luke 1:46-47).

3. The Bible documents for us the visit of the Holy Family to the Temple when Our Lord was 12 years old. When Our Lord stayed in the Temple and did not return with St. Mary and St. Joseph, they searched for Him diligently: *"So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, 'Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.'"* (Luke 2:48). These words express the feelings and heart of a mother when her son is away from her. The Church preserves in its Tradition the words of St. Mary as she stood before the Savior of the world on the Cross. They are prayed in the Litanies of the Ninth Hour of the Agpeya: *"When the Mother saw the Lamb, the Shepherd and Savior of the world hanging on the Cross, she wept and said: 'The world rejoices in receiving salvation, while my heart burns as I look at Your Crucifixion which You are enduring for the sake of all, O my Son and my God.'"* These words express the heart of a loving Mother to her Son Who is hanging on the Cross, but with a deep understanding of the Cross as the only means of achieving salvation for all humanity.

4. The Gospel according to St. John documents for us more of the Holy Virgin's words at the wedding of Cana in Galilee: *"And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, 'They have no wine.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Whatever He says to you, do it.'"* (John 2:3-5). At many other events we note that St. Mary did not speak. When the shepherds visited the Godly Child and told St. Mary about what they had seen and were told, how did St. Mary respond? The Gospel says, *"But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart."* (Luke 2:19). When St. Mary went to the Temple 40 days after the birth of Our Lord and heard the wondrous words of Simeon the Elder and Anna the daughter of Phanuel, her response was silence. She kept her silence as the Gospel says of her, *"...but His mother kept all these things in her heart."* (Luke 2:51). Today, people speak about their spiritual life using the commercial language of advertisement as if they were promoting certain products. They remind us of the Pharisees who used to promote their hypocritical spiritual life by doing charitable deeds before men, praying while standing on the corners of the streets and disfiguring their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us that our spiritual life is a sacred relationship with Our Heavenly Father *"Who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly."* (Matthew 6:4). We should learn from the silence of the Holy Virgin St. Mary how we may do good works, pray, fast, and live our spiritual life quietly and without advertisement.

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# UPCOMING RETREATS AT ST. MINA'S – 2013-14

December 19-20	Group Retreat
January 13-15	Middle of Month Retreat
January 30 - Feb 1	Group Retreat
February 17-19	Middle of Month Retreat
March 8-9	Feast of Pope Kyrollos

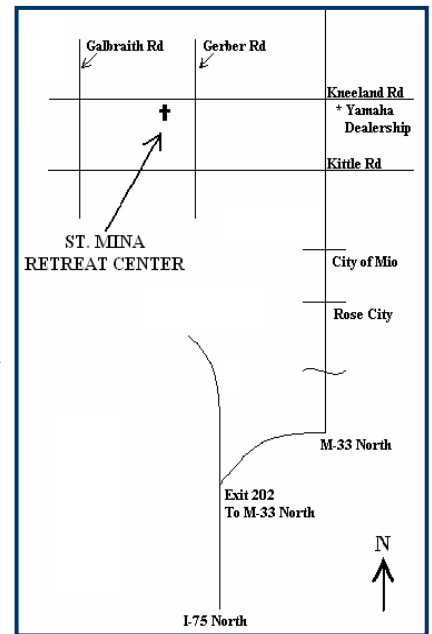
## WHAT'S NEW AT ST. MINA'S RETREAT CENTER...

### HIGH SCHOOL RETREAT ~ AUGUST 2013

During the High School summer retreat, Abouna stressed on the bible reading mentioned in Romans 1:26-27 and I Corinthians 6:9 & the discussion concentrated on the fact that we are taking a position against a sin but still love the sinner as St. Paul said "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief". Abouna answered questions from the youth regarding the eternal places, the church view of the forms we take when we depart, etc. The students had the chance to participate in the prayers of Agpeya, Tasbeha and the Holy Liturgy.

### CHOIR RETREAT ~ SEPTEMBER 2013

The church choir group gathered for a retreat at St. Mina's retreat center and house. They prayed the Asheya and the Holy Liturgy. They enjoyed a nice time in fellowship, spiritual discussion and enjoyed the retreat center including having a campfire.



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](mailto:info@stminaretreatcenter.org)