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THE LIFE OF DISCIPLESHIP

By H.H. Pope Shenouda III

In your discipleship you do not learn from the words of your teachers, but from their behavior and way of life. Even when they say nothing, you still absorb their way of living, by absorbing the good qualities, standards and patterns which they demonstrate in their life. The ear is not the only means of learning, the eye is too. There is the story of St Anba Sisoës who was so humble that he would not give any instruction to those who came wanting to be his pupils. When the fathers criticized him for not giving any guidance to a new brother whom they had sent to learn from him, he said to them: I am neither a leader nor a teacher. But if that young man wishes to learn something, then if there is anything that I can teach him, let him look at how I behave, and how I act, and let him do likewise, without my having to instruct him.

A case of learning from the example of someone's life is that of the three brothers who visited Anba Antonious. Two of them asked him questions, while the third sat silent. When the saint asked the silent one why he had not asked about anything, the brother replied: It is enough for me just to look at your face, father. Just looking at the face of the saint was enough for the brother to learn a lesson from him, even without that holy man saying a word to him. He saw how the saint spoke and answered and observed his gentle, kind and humble features... and he learned. As another example we have the occasion when Pope Theophilus visited the desert of Shiheet. The fathers said to St Anba Paphnuti: Say something to help the Pope. And he replied to them: If he has not been able to benefit from my silence, then it is unlikely that he will be helped by my words, either. This is what St Anba Antonious did at the beginning of his monastic life. He used to learn from the life of the hermits by observing them. He was like a bee which sucks nectar from every flower. From one recluse he learned calmness, from another humility, and from a third silence, and from a fourth how to speak well. What St Antonious did reminds me of another useful piece of teaching.

In your discipleship do not try to be just like a carbon copy of one particular person. For there isn't a single human being in whom all the virtues are to be found. Also, what suits one person's particular character, may not suit yours at all. So just take from everyone those beautiful qualities in him which you admire. And take as much of those qualities as you feel is right for you and in whatever way suits your character, your mentality and situation. This, then, is being a disciple of life, and part of that is being a disciple of the lives of the saints. St. Paul says about this: **"Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of <their> conduct."** (Heb. 13:7). And the Lord also gave us the example of the faith of the centurion, who said: **"Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed."** (Matt. 8:8). Then the Lord said to those who were following Him: **"Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"** (Matt. 8:10). This was how the Lord provided the people with actual examples from those living around them, and who were good models for others to learn from. The Lord Jesus also told them the parable of the widow who gave all that she had out of her poverty, (Mark 12:44) and that of the woman who poured a jar of expensive perfume over His head, at the house of Simon the Leper. And He said: **"Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her."** (Mark 14:9). So there are examples from which you can learn not only in the lives of the saints who have passed over, but there are also living examples around you. Perhaps you may find in those with whom you associate and mix, and in those who live in your generation, even if you haven't actually had any personal dealing with them, good examples from which you can pick up or absorb or imitate their virtues. We see in children an example of those who learn by imitation. Children have not yet reached a level of intellectual maturity and understanding which will help them to learn about the world or comprehend advice, but they live as those around them live. They absorb life, religion and everything else around them by unquestioning acceptance, not by teaching. Just as you learn from people's virtues, you can also learn from their faults. If you see something that is not right, and notice its awful consequences, and its repercussions on others, you can learn a lesson from it by making sure that you avoid that mistake in your own life.

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UPCOMING RETREATS AT ST. MINA'S – 2011

June 9-11, Thurs-Sat

Family Retreat

June 21-22, Tues-Wed

Feast of the Consecration of the First Church

June 23-25, Thurs-Sat

Middle School Retreat

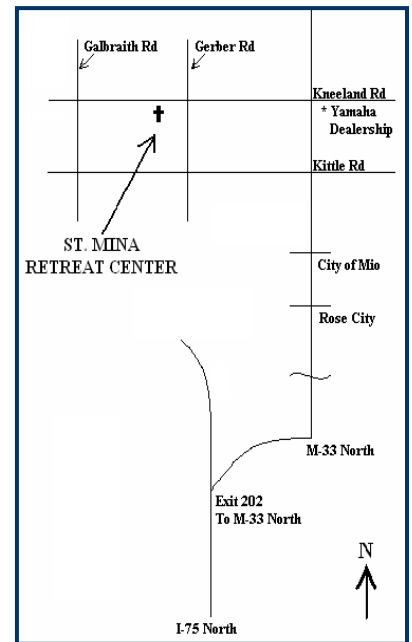
June 30-July 2, Thurs-Sat

High School Retreat

THE FEAST OF POPE KYRILLOS VI

MARCH 8-9, 2011

A large group of over 50 worshippers gathered together at St. Mina Retreat Center to commemorate the Feast of the departure of Pope Kyrillos the Sixth, the 116th Pope of Alexandria. The group gathered together for the Raising of Incense on the evening of March 8 followed by a spiritual discussion. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated the following morning. Following the Liturgy, despite very rainy weather, the group gathered to have lunch together outside, under a tent. All the attendees benefitted from a time of fellowship and prayer. May the prayers and intercessions of Pope Kyrillos VI and his patron Saint, St. Mina the martyr and miracle-maker be with us all.



ST. MINA BUILDING CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

A new building is under construction at St. Mina's Retreat Center. Construction efforts began in mid- March. The new building will have two floors including 12 rooms each equipped with own bathroom and shower, a gathering area which can accommodate 80 people, and a complete kitchen facility. Upon completion at the end of July, the new building will be a great addition to the center's hosting capabilities. The building cost is estimated at \$ 550,000. 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.



OTHER NEWS...

A DVD is now available which commemorates all the events at the St. Mina Retreat Center from 2005 until 2010. It is available at the fund raising table of the retreat in St. Mary's church after the second liturgy.

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