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## THE GREAT LENT: JOURNEY TO THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER

BY ABOUNA PISHOY KAMEL

The Church has a strong program during this fast put by the Fathers through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, which became to the soul a source of survival and spiritual filling. Christ fasted for us and with us and certainly He is a partner with each fasting soul. We can find through meditation on the Sunday readings a strong spiritual program for every soul, which may be titled, "The Journey to the Bosom of the Father." **1. Preparation Sunday** (Matt. 6:1-8) "When you pray enter into your closet,...shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret..." Also if you give alms or fast, that also should be to the Father in secret. The Church declares to us that the closet is the point of departure of the journey of Lent. The fact that the Church starts the fast by directing us to the closet means that the fast is not only related to the flesh but it is related more to the spirit and to Kingdom of God. The week of preparation is the week of the closet. The journey starts after closing the door-the door that looks at the world. Then there opens before us another door that faces heaven, "Our father who art in heaven", "I looked, and, behold a door was opened in heaven." (Rev 4:1) Where in the closet we discover our sins...and we hold the feet of the Lord to free our feet the prodigal road, and we taste the love of God. **2. Surrender of Life to the Heavenly Father:** (Matt. 6:24-34) The gospel of the first Sunday of Lent calls for the surrender of life to the Father. "Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat...nor yet for the body, what you shall wear....do not worry about tomorrow." The reason for not worrying is that "your heavenly Father knows that you have of all these things." (Matt. 6:32). The practice of this week is a call to a secure life in the care of the Father and the carrying out of what comes in the verse, "Do not worry about tomorrow," physically, mentally and spiritually. The Christian commandment is full of risks but its assurance is the care of the Father. In this week, we experience the complete surrender to the care of the Father and to His commandment. **3. Why does God forget us if He is our Father?** (Matt. 4: 1-10) The gospel of the Second Sunday deals with the temptation of doubting God's paternity to us, "If you are the son of God-why does He leave you hungry? Why does God allow the presence of disease, failure and the death of our beloved?" Practice: It is our duty this week to examine our faith in the love of the Father who gave His Son for us. Our faith should surpass all temptations and emotions. Faith in the Father should be a faith that fortifies us against the temptation of the Adversary, the hardships of this world and the sufferings and desires of the body. **4. Repentance in the Father's bosom** (Luke 15:11-32) Repentance in Christianity is different from any other repentance; it is the return of the son to his Father and the Father falling on the neck of His son to embrace him and kiss him (Luke 15:20). This is the gospel of the third Sunday. The Father's paternity to us is not because of our righteousness, but because of His paternity to his children, especially the sinners. The Father's paternity for us challenges all our sins, our failures, our betrayal of His love and our mistreatment of His name. Practice: Brother, do not permit this week to go by without a true repentance and resorting to the Father's embrace. **5. Worship of the Father in Spirit and in Truth** (John 4:1-42) The next step after repentance is worship of the Father Who accepted and loved me and cleansed me from my sins and put me in His bosom. Contrition of the spirit and submission to the Father and the love of frequent prostrations in worship are the expressions of our love for Him who opened His arms for us sinners and kissed us. This is the end of the road of repentance in the Father's bosom, and this is the sweetest fruit of the chamber and which the Father gives us in secret. The Church, inspired by the Spirit, stresses in the period of Lent the use of prostrations during private prayers and in the Divine Liturgy. **6. Bethesda and Baptism** (John 5:1-18) The Gospel of the fifth Sunday talks about Bethesda which symbolizes Baptism. We, the crowds of Christians, were beside it sick, lame, blind and paralyzed; suffering every spiritual sickness. The Angel that moves the water symbolizes the Holy Spirit which comes down on the water of Baptism. The practice of this week is to hope and never to despair—Baptism has given us the grace of sonship. **7. Sonship is a Spiritual Enlightenment** (John 9:1-41) The last Sunday in Lent is the Sunday of Baptism, during which we read the gospel of the man born blind. a. "I was blind and now I see." (continued on page 2)

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# UPCOMING RETREATS AT ST. MINA'S – 2011

February 21 – 23

Individual/Family Retreats

March 8 – 9

Commemoration of the Feast of Pope Kyrillos VI

March 31 – April 2

Individual/Family Retreats

April 11 – 13

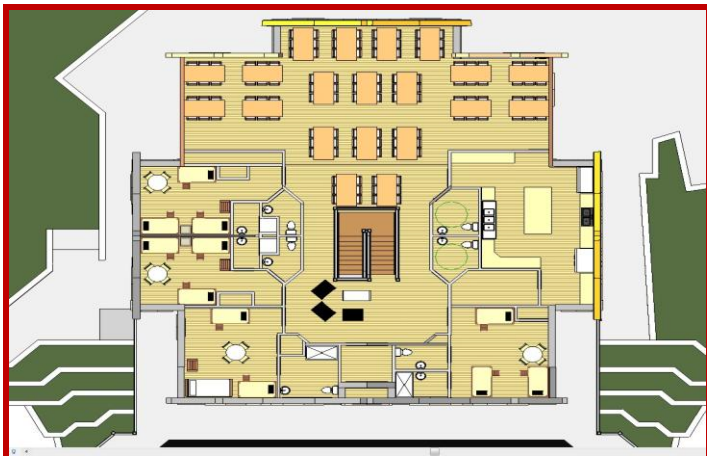
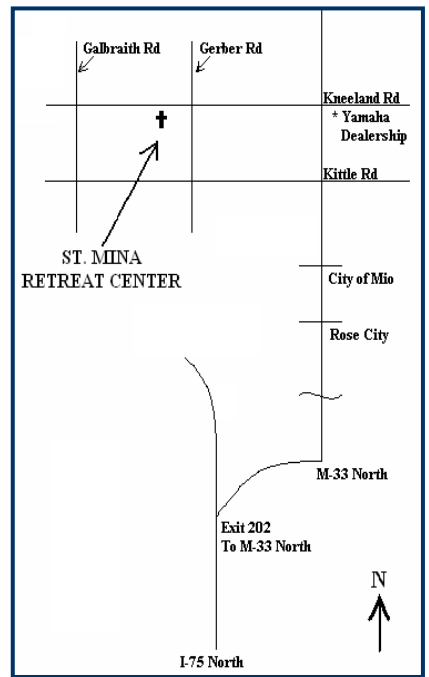
Individual/Family Retreats

## THE GREAT LENT: JOURNEY TO THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER (CONTINUED)

This is our everlasting experience as children of the Heavenly Father. We were blind and He opened our sight so we beheld miracles of His laws and we saw what the prophets longed to see, and He gave us understanding of the Scriptures. b. Baptism means washing (in the pool of Siloam), so we become pure. Repentance is a continuous washing, so we may see clearly. **8. The Kingdom of the Beloved Son** (Mt. 21:1-17; Mk. 11:1-11; Lk.19:29-48; Jn. 12:12-19) This week begins with the entrance of Christ to rule Jerusalem riding on a donkey and ends by Him ruling from the Cross on Calvary where He draws all to Him—all the children to rule with Him in the Kingdom of His Father.

## St. Mina Residential Building Groundbreaking *January 31, 2011*

On Monday, January 31, 2011, a groundbreaking took place marking the construction of a new Residential Building on the grounds of St. Mina's Retreat Center. God willing, the building will be 8500 square feet and have 12 rooms equipped with their own bathrooms and showers. The proposed building will also have kitchen facilities and a meeting room with a capacity of 75 people. The estimated cost of the building is \$600,000.



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