



VOLUME 8, ISSUE 2

APRIL – JUNE 2014

OUR CHALLENGE AS CHRISTIANS

BY FR. MOSES SAMAAH

As we live in this world, we are bound to face difficulties and sometimes feel bombarded by troubles from all directions. At one time or another, we may seek assistance, support, or encouragement from someone higher than ourselves. This is an innate longing in all of us. As we stand at the crossroads, where do we go for guidance and direction? Where do we find help to face the perplexities of life, as we know them here on earth? Who can provide us with the aid and support we need to overcome and prevail? For some, the answers may not be easy or simple. But for us, as Christian believers, the answer should be clear, because it reveals the core of our understanding of what spirituality truly means, as well as the deep inter-relation between our physical and spiritual needs. Satisfying our material needs is not bad or evil, but the spiritual needs are more important and can not be satisfied by material resources. In fact, satisfying our spiritual needs solves many if not all of the problems we face on a daily basis.

For us, as Christians, the assistance we need is Divine help, the “Grace of God”. It is a gift given to each of us if we wish to accept it. This is the central paradox! It is an immense and powerful energy given universally and without exception. Yet, the secret of unlocking this energy lies within each of us. By our own free will, we choose to accept grace or reject it. This power sanctifies, strengthens, nourishes, and perfects us so we can have communion with our Creator, Who is the source of all power and goodness within us. Only then we will be able to face life’s perplexities and troubles without failing and crumbling under what seems to be a heavy load. St. Paul tells us, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God.” (Eph. 2:8) We are worthy of this gift not because of our own good works, but because of God’s divine love. Therefore, our holiness and sanctification, as well as every loving work and service we perform is attributed to the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, only when we allow Him to work through us. We receive this divine power of the Holy Spirit in Baptism, but determination through fervent prayer is required so we can remain belonging to God. In other words, it is a blessed state, which requires a victorious struggle against the devil so we can live in communion with God. But we must not “quench the Spirit within us.” (1 Thess. 5: 19) Will this challenge and struggle be easy? Of course not! The devil and his angels explore each of us individually to find our weaknesses. He is very tactful in his attacks. He offers appealing visions to our eyes, music to our ears, and to each of our senses something tempting to make us sin. Our tongues may speak evil of others or lie and our hands may not do work to glorify God. He holds in front of our eyes earthly honors and false values, making them seem more preferable to the heavenly ones. In our businesses, he sets up ways for us to earn profits by shady means. His tactics have many facets and he is very wily, but we must be wary and always alert.

St. Peter tells us, “Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith....May the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.” (1 Pet. 5: 8-10) So long as we live on this earth, our challenges will never disappear. But as long as we have the desire to please God and walk according to His commandments, grace and Divine help will always be granted to us. This will allow us to be in a blessed state of communion with God, which is truly the goal of all our labors and ascetic endeavors. We must do everything for the glory of God by the grace of the Holy Spirit. We also must be defiant towards the sin, which wants to control and defeat us. We need constant reminder that in facing our challenges, “we do not lose heart” (2 Cor. 4: 16), because “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” (2 Tim. 1: 7) Through the intercessions of the Holy Theotokos, may our Lord always sustain our weaknesses, by the Grace of the Holy Spirit, so we can face our adversary and his challenges and in the end be victorious in our struggle.

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

October 16-18 - Retreat

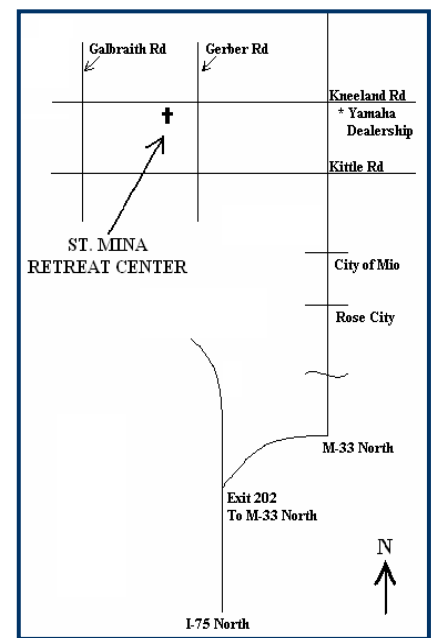
October 30-November 1 –Retreat

November 23-24 - Retreat

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

HIGH SCHOOL SPRING RETREAT

The theme of the retreat was the goals of our spiritual life. Abouna Mina discussed with the youth the purpose of every spiritual practice. Such as the goal for prayers is to feel the presence of God in every moment of our life. The goal of reading the Bible is to reach the point where you can relive the event as it happened at that time. We were also blessed with the presence of Abouna Mark who spent a whole day with the youth. He led the Liturgy prayer in the morning then spent free time with the youth followed by a question and answers session about the heavenly places. We prayed the midnight praise every night and had a chance to enjoy talking with and listening to our fathers the priests. Our next trip is planned for late August, we can not wait to go there again



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