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THE GIFT OF GIVING

JULY – SEPTEMBER 2013
BY ABOUNA BISHOY KAMEL

Two weeks before Christmas, there was a lady in the hospital recovering from an illness. When she came back from surgery, she awoke to a room full of several cards and bouquets of flowers. She also realized that she had another patient staying with her. This lady was going to have surgery the next day on her foot. But when the second woman went to have surgery and returned, she only received once small wreath. She put this on the bare wall in front of her. The first woman kept thinking of getting a bouquet for the other, but the flower shop was always closed. She looked around her flowers and tried to find one of the bouquets to give to her, but with each one, she remembered one of her friends and how upset they would be if they knew that she had given her flowers to another woman. Before she could get something for this woman, it was her time to leave. On her way out, she took this one wreath – her only gift and gave it to the first lady and said, “Merry Christmas. You’re a nice lady.” The first lady began to cry when she realized, that out of all her gifts and flowers, she could not give even a small one to this woman sharing her room; but that woman gave the only gift she had ever received.

Importance of Giving-- Alms-giving is a work of the Holy Spirit, an indication that we have attained brotherly love. One modern saint known for his charitable acts was St. Abraam (1829 – 1914), the Bishop of Fayoum. He took the verse in Matthew literally and gave everything. He used to leave his cell open for anyone in need, and say “Go in take what you want.” He was known to give to all who asked him—everything from food, to furniture, or simple cash. Not only did he feed the poor, but ate with them. He lived very meekly even as a bishop, eating dried beans and bread. He opened the monastery to them and made a shelter for them. He gave his own clothes to them. When he departed, they found only his wooden cross and his staff as his own—for he had given away everything else before he died. But we do not give for the sake of giving. We give, out of the Love God has given us. The Lord asked us to give Him our entire heart. He asked us to give our money to those who are in need, for by doing so we give to Him. As He told us: “For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to Me.” (Matthew 25:35, 36) There were many people who when they gave to others, they saw Christ. Be careful of any fear or hesitation of giving to God in this way, for this may be the work of the Devil, who desires for us to worship our money instead of God. He wants us to be concerned over the amount of money that we feel we are losing. He hopes that we forget to pay our tithes. He devises ways of tricking us into wasting our money on other things instead of giving the Lord what He asked from us.

How should I give? - Do not think that just because you are young, you cannot give. God asked for our hearts, no matter how old we are. Give lovingly – let the amount that you give be an indication of the amount of love you have for God. Perfection is voluntarily to sacrifice all and to follow Christ for the sake of the kingdom. For every person perfection is giving up whatever is loved more than God. It doesn’t matter what we give, but what is left. The widow who gave two mites did not have much, but she was rewarded in front of everybody for giving all that she had, her entire livelihood. She had faith that God would supply for her. When we give to the Lord, He will bless what we have left. One man once said, “When you give of yourself, you receive more than you give.” Give generously. St. Paul also explained that “He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly. He who sows bountifully will reap bountifully. (1 Corinthians 9:6). What we give, we will reap. For each morsel I give to the poor; a plate will be set before me at the Wedding Feast. For every donation I give to the church, the larger my habitation will be in Paradise. For every piece of clothing I give to the naked, I will be given a finely woven robe to wear. If we give with generosity we will receive generously. Every single opportunity we give to others, we will receive much more in heaven. **Give wisely** – What are we living for? Until we answer this, we cannot determine how we should spend our money. **Give gladly** – How are you giving? What are our hearts saying? God outgives. As St. Paul said, God loves the cheerful giver, not the grumpy one. **Give humbly** – the amount that we give cannot compare to what he has given us therefore we must give in humility. Our Lord warned us: “Don’t let your right hand know what your left hand is doing.” (Matthew 6:3-4) Bishop Sarabamon during the 19th century used to disguise himself at night and carry a large basket full of needs for the poor. He would knock on the homes of the poor, leave the food, and walk away without saying a word.

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UPCOMING RETREATS AT ST. MINA'S – 2013

October 3-5 – Group Retreat

October 14-16 – Individual Retreat

October 31 – November 2 – Group Retreat

November 23-24 – Feast of St. Mina

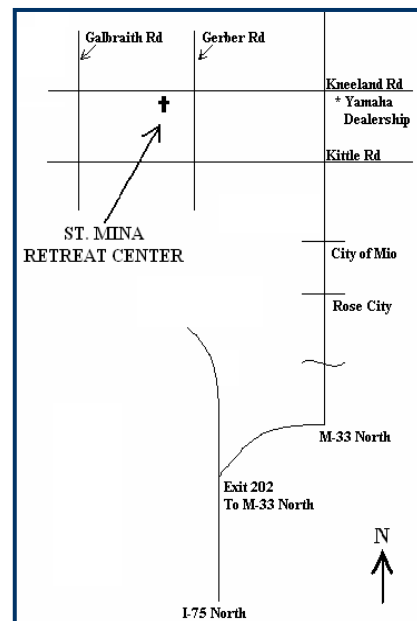
December 5-7 – Group Retreat

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

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS RETREAT ~~ APRIL 2013

During this retreat, Abouna spoke with the youth about two important topics. The first topic was Living the Life of Repentance every day and how to practice the Sacrament of Confession. We discussed the importance of daily self-examination as a way to evaluate and correct our ways, as well as the importance of setting realistic and achievable goals in their spiritual lives and monitoring these goals on a weekly basis with our Father of Confession.

In the second session, we discussed the shortcomings we encounter in communicating effectively with our parents and how important it is for the youth to be upfront and truthful with their parents as parents are entrusted to guide them and lead them in the path of life and raise them in the fear of God. The older youth led a Tasbeha teaching session with the younger youth to encourage them to participate in this great and enjoyable service. All the youth enjoyed this form of discipleship within the group as the younger youth saw the love and the zeal the older youth have for this heavenly service. During the retreat, Abouna lead the prayers of Agpeya and Tasbeha, as well as the sacrament of anointing the sick and we celebrated the holy Liturgy. The youth enjoyed a wonderful time and loving fellowship and look forward to future retreats.



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