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GENTLENESS: AN ESSENTIAL AND PURE VESSEL

BY H.G. BISHOP YOUSSEF

Gentleness is a fruit of the spirit, a virtue of meekness of personality, mildness in discretion, softness of manner, being amiable among friends, and sensitivity to the needs of others. A Christian's gentle approach consistently encourages good will and reinforces contentment. St. Paul advised the early Christians *"Therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another, even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do"* (Colossians 3:12-13). The early church fathers frequently associated the Holy Spirit with the virtue of gentleness. The Holy Spirit is of a sensitive essence, and greatly favors a gentle dwelling place that is mild, and practices moderation. Hermas (c. 150) wrote, "If you are patient, the Holy Spirit that dwells in you will be pure. He will not be darkened by any evil spirit, but, dwelling in a broad region, he will rejoice and be glad. But if any outburst of anger takes place, immediately the Holy Spirit, who is sensitive, is constricted. He does not have a pure place, and He seeks to depart."

St. Clement of Alexandria (c. 195) addressed the gentle nature of the Holy Spirit's descent when he wrote, "When the Lord Jesus Christ was baptized, God assumed the likeness not of another man, but of a dove, for He wished, by a new apparition of the Spirit in the likeness of a dove, to declare His simplicity and majesty." The dove symbolizes many virtues. It is white denoting purity. It is a sensitive bird with the least noise causing it to quickly take flight. The dove's break into flight is a soft feathering rippling flight with hardly a sound. It is a soft spoken bird which many attributed the dove's song in similarity to a soft moaning. The dove does not attack other birds even when hungry, nor is it a scavenger. Doves, such as turtledoves, were often required for sacrifice such as the case of the beloved Virgin St. Mary. The virtue of gentleness when abiding in a pure vessel or one that desires to be pure encourages slowness to wrath which is itself a virtue. Anger derives from retaliation and spitefulness and is often swift and deliberate. The virtue of gentleness helps develop the personality to be slow to anger and encourages the capability of calming oneself and of thinking through situations where anger has erupted. In gentleness one is taught to control their nerves and their tongue, and use wisdom in responding to angry persons and situations.

St. James known as "James the Just" and the first bishop of Jerusalem, instructed the twelve tribes of Levi which were scattered abroad, *"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;"* (James 1:19). St. James encouraged continual repentance, patience, gentleness, and self control in daily living and against the severe persecution, injustice, poverty, and other trials the new converts of the early church were combating. The early church continues to survive, thrive, and the One faith has endured through the centuries by simple adherence to the Christian virtues, faith, endurance, gentleness, kindness and good works. Further, the blessed St. James in His Holy New Testament book further preaches and teaches that to continue in the meekness of wisdom is true wisdom. *"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, and demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy, and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy"* (James 3:13-17). Gentleness is a fruit of the spirit, in fact it is a fruit, a virtue, and essential for those whom desire to have the Holy Spirit abide within them. Gentleness through its quietness resounds the nature of the Heavenly and saves us from sin... *"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted"* (Galatians 6:1).

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UPCOMING RETREATS AT ST. MINA'S – 2010

October 30- Nov 2

Monthly Retreat

November 4-6

Monthly Retreat

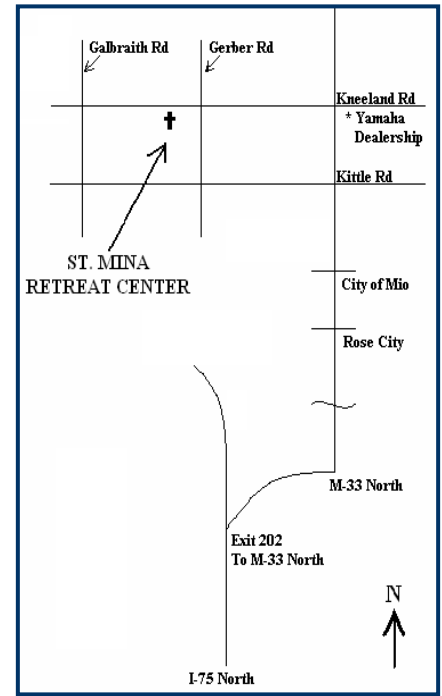
November 24

Celebration of the Feast of St. Mina

Middle School Youth Trip

June 24-26, 2010

Once again, for the third time, a group of 34 middle school youth, along with 16 servants were very excited to go to the St. Mina Retreat Center. We had a wonderful time together learning about who we are and studying this through various personalities in the Bible. We learned the importance of knowing who we are and how to live to our full potential. During the days, we would have fun playing volleyball, soccer, rafting and basketball. We also had 3 lectures and got to understand our role in this world, and who we are as Coptic Christians. As the retreat center is quiet and peaceful, it gave is a great atmosphere for personal meditation where we could just sit with ourselves and evaluate how we can build a Christian character. Friday morning we attended the Divine Liturgy and then we spent the day rafting in the Ausable River. We all got a chance to sing, laugh and joke together as we made our way down the river together. At night, we had Asheya followed by Tasbeha where we sang praises in one voice. After Tasbeha, we all sat by the campfire roasting marshmallows and being in unity. We were also blessed to have another Liturgy on Saturday morning, which was a double blessing for this year. Even though we are split up into 6th, 7th and 8th grade; we were all united as one group at the retreat center, as Psalm 133 reads "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity..."



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