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GOD IS PRESENT *By H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III*

In every hardship I say three statements: “God is present,” “Everything works for the good,” and “It is destined to end.” I would like to talk to you about the statement, “God is present.” “God is present” means God sees, God hears, and God knows what is happening. God will handle it and act and will never leave matters the way they are... And we are used to see God’s hand clearly in our life and all what we face. We saw God in every time stepping-in in our life matters and this is our belief. We do not deal with people a lot but we deal more with God Himself.

* God is present as the Pantocrator. And we mention this characteristic a lot in our prayers. The Pantocrator, meaning that all is under His hand, all is under His control... All people are in God’s hands. Believe me, even the devil himself and all the evil powers are controlled by God Himself, Who draws limits for them. Otherwise, if the strong ate the weak, people would have never lived on earth, unless if God was interfering and interfering strongly as well. God created the universe and did not leave it but He manages all its matters...And I constantly say to everyone: You are not alone. You are living life and God is with you. He never leaves you for a single moment, nor for a twinkling of an eye.

“God is present” for He is the Shepherd of us all...And so the chanter says in the psalm: “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.” And says “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me.” (Ps. 23).

When we say “God is present” we mean that He is the Preserver and the Supporter. We always chant a phrase from the psalm “The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in, from this time forth, and even forevermore.” (Ps. 121). It is a phrase that the guardian angel says to every human while he prays. Or the praying person repeats this to himself to comfort himself, calm down and assure himself. We believe that God saves us from the devil, from sins and from tribulations. He saved St. Athanasius when he was exiled four times, saved St. John in his exile on the Island of Patmos and appeared to him and showed him many visions. Even the children, He says about them in the psalm: “The LORD preserves the simple” (Ps. 116:6). We also will get very troubled if we forget that God is present and He preserves us.

If God is so in His kindness, then why does He allow trials to come? God allows trials to come because of their benefits. Saint James says about that: “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials” (Jam. 1:2). And we should know the reasons behind every trial coming on us and how to deal with it. Among the benefits of trials is that when a trial come upon us we start checking ourselves from inside for each to settle an account with oneself, and reconcile with God if we were far from Him. And in trials, we see that people in their fasts, prayers and taking communion were reconciling with God so that they ask Him without shame. This is according to the Lord’s saying: “Return to Me, and I will return to you” (Ml 3:7). Among the benefits of trials is that they reveal things to us and give us a clearer vision. As the poet says: “May God bless tribulations, by them I distinguished my enemy from my friend.” Also, among the benefits of trials is that through them we see God’s hand working with us and with others. In trials we gain a spiritual experience by which we see that God is present. We, brothers, practically recognize God and His work, not through theology books or doctrine books but in our whole life path. God is blessed in all His work with us.

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UPCOMING RETREATS AT ST. MINA'S ~ 2010

June 3 – June 5

Family Retreat

June 21 – June 22

Feast of the Consecration of St. Mina's Church

July

Open for Youth Visits and Retreats

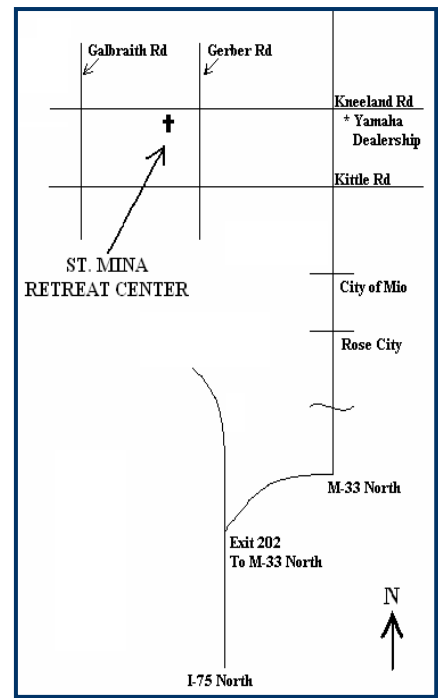
August

Open for Youth Visits and Retreats

CELEBRATING THE FEAST OF POPE KYROLLOS – MARCH 9, 2010

A very large group of worshippers gathered at St. Mina's Retreat Center in March to celebrate the Feast of Pope Kyrollos. Around 50 members of the congregation made the journey to Mio the night before and spent the evening in the raising of incense and offering glorification to Pope Kyrollos. Another 50 members of the congregation took the bus together early the morning of the Feast to Mio. All together about 100 worshippers gathered together to celebrate The Holy Liturgy, followed by a lunch which was enjoyed outside and free-time to enjoy each other's company.

All those who attended received a wonderful commemoration of the Feast, including a book about Pope Kyrollos and Holy Oil. May the blessings and intercessions of Pope Kyrollos and St. Mina be with us always.



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