



# PERFECTION OF LOVE

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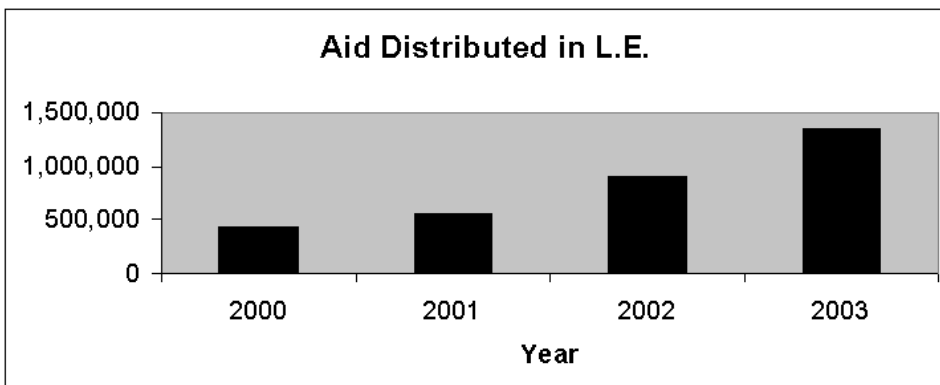
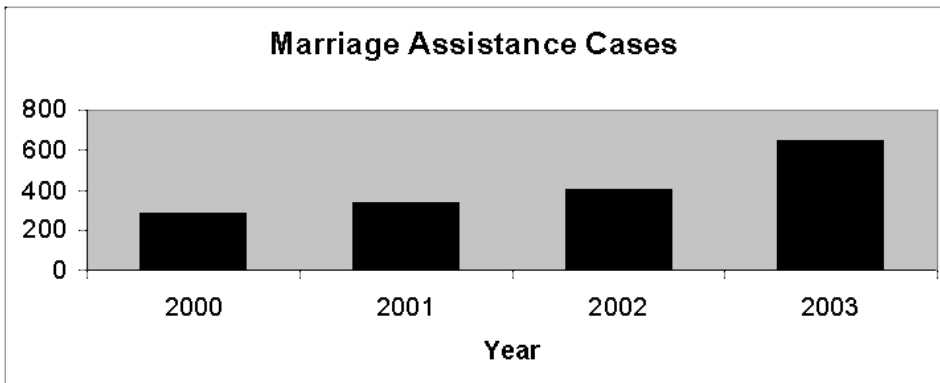
## Celebrating with the Brethren of the Lord

As we prepare to celebrate the joy of the Feast the Holy Resurrection, many are also preparing to celebrate the joys of Holy Matrimony. Generally, the fifty joyous days following Easter are customarily predominant for celebrating weddings. As such, the Agape Charity Department actively addresses this need through the Marriage Expense Assistance Program. This program assists couples preparing for marriage by aiding in the provisions of home furnishings, including bedrooms, living rooms, etc., along with clothes and other necessities. This program also extends aid to the bride's immediate family so that they do not take from their daughter's finances due to their own dire needs.

The following table shows the number of cases helped and assistance distributed respectively in Egyptian pounds for years 2000-2003. The graphs also clearly indicate the increasing assistance required over the years. However, it is important to note that the number of cases helped does not reflect the true magnitude of the need presented.

MARRIAGE EXPENSE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Year	Number of Cases Helped	Assistance Distributed (in Egyptian Pounds)
2000	285	433,650.00
2001	335	558,025.00
2002	402	904,700.00
2003	644	1,346,955.00



## Sayings of the Fathers

We ought to serve God, trusting in His promises. Let us therefore serve God with a pure heart, and we shall be righteous. But if we do not serve Him, because we believe not the promise of God, we shall be miserable. For the prophetic word also declares, "Wretched are those of a double mind, and who doubt in their heart, who say, 'All these things have we heard even in the times of our fathers; but though we have waited day by day, we have seen none of them accomplished'. Ye fools! compare yourselves to a tree; take, for instance, the vine. First of all it sheds its leaves, then the bud appears. after that the sour grape, and then the fully-ripened fruit. So, likewise, my people have borne disturbances and afflictions, but afterwards shall they receive their good things." Wherefore, my brethren, let us not be of a double-mind, but let us hope and endure, that we also may obtain the reward. For He is faithful, who has promised that He will bestow on everyone a reward according to his works. If, therefore, we shall do righteousness in the sight of God, we shall enter into His kingdom, and shall receive the promises, "which ear hath not heard, nor eye seen, neither have entered into the heart of man."

**CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA,  
The Homily Chapter XI**

## Spiritual Message

### Reverend Fathers and beloved brethren, friends of BLESS USA

The peace, love and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. I would like to express my gratitude for the generosity and kindness of heart that you have shown towards your less fortunate brothers and sisters in Egypt.

My beloved brethren, we will continue to contemplate on:

#### "The Blessings of Mercy to the Merciful"

The Divine Inspiration mentions that many blessings are bestowed upon those who are merciful to others. In the previous newsletters, we contemplated on over twenty different blessings. We continue, my beloved, to elaborate on the twenty-second blessing bestowed upon the merciful:

#### The Twenty Second Blessing:

*"The Lord answers the merciful prayer, and when they cry, He will say 'Here I am'"*

First, we remind ourselves of what the Divine Inspiration says: "Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?...Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am'" (Is. 58:7, 9). We see that not only shall our Lord answer when we call, but He will also say, "Here I am," when we cry. This, my beloved, is a blessing experienced in the lives of those who are merciful. We saw examples of this blessing in the last newsletter:

- 1.) our teacher David the Prophet;
- 2.) the Apostle St. Paul;
- 3.) H.H. the Late Pope Mattaos I.

Now, my beloved, we further reflect on the lives of those who are merciful:

#### The family of St. Takla Hemanot El-Habashy (the Ethiopian):

St. Takla Hemanot came from a very wealthy family. His father was Sagaz-Ab, meaning "the Father's Grace," and his mother was Sara. She was called Akzeharya, meaning "the chosen one from God" because she was radiantly beautiful and full of virtue. Despite their wealth, both Sagaz-Ab and Akzeharya walked in the way of righteousness and were very merciful to those in need. They commemorated Feast of the Archangel Michael, on the twelfth of every Coptic month, by serving the Brethren of the Lord. As part of his service, Sagaz-Ab would go to church early to teach the congregation about the foundation of faith, and would contribute from his wealth with each visit. United in heart, both Sagaz-Ab and Akzeharya distributed all their wealth to the churches, monasteries and the needy.

During this period, the king, who worshiped pagans, caused much destruction and turmoil, destroying churches and taking the women of the land into captivity, including Akzeharya. She and her husband pleaded to the Lord in their time of tribulation, and they heard the voice of the Lord in their hearts saying, "Here I am." Miraculously, Akzeharya returned to Sagaz-

Ab that same day. Faithfully, they turned to the Lord again because they were unable to have children. When they pleaded to the Lord to grant them a child, the Lord answered them by sending them an angel to tell them the news about the birth of their son, St. Takla Hemanot.

This, my beloved, shows us how the Lord blesses and answers the prayers of the merciful.

#### The great St. Abraam the Bishop of Fayoum and Giza:

St. Abraam was renowned for his undying kindness and mercy to the needy and less fortunate, to the point that he turned the Bishopric into a shelter for the Brethren of the Lord. All the contributions, which he received, he immediately distributed among the Brethren. St. Abraam was completely selfless in giving. He distributed clothes to the needy and food to the hungry and refused to eat food that was any better from that which was presented to those in need. He even gave his own possessions away, such as his scarf to an elderly woman and his blanket to a man in need. As a result of his merciful acts to the poor, St. Abraam experienced the blessings of the Lord answering his prayers, as we can see in several instances during his life: In 1912, the police commissioner of Faioum asked St. Abraam to visit his house because his son was possessed by an evil spirit. St. Abraam honored his request and took his disciple with him to the commissioner's house. After praying a long prayer, St. Abraam anointed the son with oil, and the evil spirit departed from him.

One day, a non-Christian woman from the center of the township of Manfalott came to the saint, for she was paralyzed for many years. Father Abdelmessih El-Baramosy witnessed this woman's visit to St. Abraam and said, "The woman entered on the shoulders of four men, and St. Abraam welcomed them all. He started to pray for the woman and continued in prayer for three days. The Lord answered his prayers and the woman left the Bishopric walking on her own two feet."

We also recall an instance when St. Abraam prayed to the Lord for a couple so that the Lord may bless them with a child. The young woman was not able to bear the child after conception. Everytime she got pregnant, she miscarried. Knowledgeable of St. Abraam, she and her husband traveled from Alexandria to Fayoum to meet him. St. Abraam prayed and asked the Lord to bless her pregnancy that the baby may grow healthy. It happened that she got pregnant soon after, but was suddenly infected with a severe disease. The doctors had to operate on her abdomen, and neither she nor the fetus were expected to survive. Through the intercessions of St. Abraam, she was healed by the Lord and moreover had twins.

This, my beloved, shows us how the Lord blesses and answers the prayers of the merciful. May our Lord fill your lives with these great blessings and compensate you with the incorruptible instead of the corruptible, the heavenly instead of the earthly and the eternal instead of the temporal.

Bishop Youannes

General Bishop and Secretary of H.H. Pope Shenouda III