



PERFECTION OF LOVE

A B L E S S U S A N E W S L E T T E R

Vol. 8 No. 4

Addressing Living Conditions

According to the United Nations, Egypt's current population stands at 70.5 million people, and is projected to be 90 million by 2015. The majority of Egypt's population lives on 5% of the country's land, where one quarter of the population resides in the capital city of Cairo.

As a result of poverty in villages, a great number of people migrate to the cities, seeking better lives and new homes. Rapid increases in population and rural migration have, in turn, led to rapid urban growth. For this reason, the major cities in Egypt are facing a scarcity in housing, especially in the most densely populated areas of the city. Unfortunately, the growth in the housing sector has not been adequate to meet the needs. Housing in the settlements that have witnessed a substantial growth is often overcrowded, poorly constructed, illegal, and unregulated by building enforcement agencies. These houses are especially vulnerable when natural disasters, such as earthquakes or flooding, occur. Also, vital provisions, including clean water, electricity, and sanitation are minimal or at times not even provided in these settlements. Because of this, they have become a health concern.

In an effort to aid in alleviating the suffering of the Brethren of the Lord who are unable to find adequate living conditions, BLESS has created two programs: 1. the Housing Program and 2. the Roofing Program.

The Housing Program provides residency for the homeless, for people living in overcrowded conditions, and for those migrating from rural areas. In these overcrowded houses, several families reside together in one apartment, essentially sharing everything- including a single bathroom. This program also assists the many that are living in homes without running water, electricity and proper sanitation.

Additionally, those who reside in the villages face difficulties, as well. There are many families that lack adequate shelter from the harsh elements of nature. **The Roofing Program** builds roofs in poverty-stricken villages, which contain an overwhelming number of "houses" which have no ceilings.

Dear Member

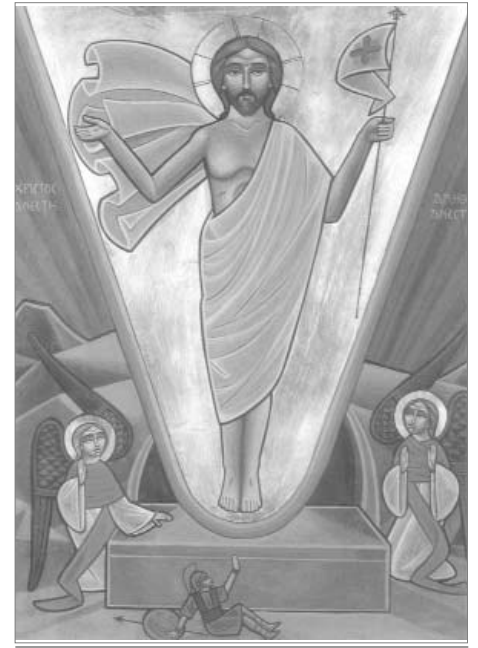
Did you know that BLESS USA participates in **Matching Gift Programs**? If you would like more information about Matching Gift, please contact BLESS USA.

God bless your service.

Respectfully,
Member Services

Service Updates...

HG Bishop Youannes met with the servants of BLESS USA on Saturday May 7th and also on Thursday May 19th. His Grace discussed in great detail the structure of BLESS in Egypt, and the services that are provided by the different departments. His Grace also talked about the theology of serving the "Brethren of the Lord" and the spiritual blessings we receive through serving them. We pray that the Lord will preserve the life HG Bishop Youannes and continue to support the service for the Glory of His Church.



Sayings of the Fathers

Tell me, then, where do you get your riches from? From whom did you receive it and from whom did he receive who transmits it to you? "From my father and he from my grandfather." But can you, going back through many generations show that the riches were justly acquired? No, you cannot. The root and origin of them must have been injustice. Why? Because God in the beginning made not one man rich and another poor. Nor did he afterwards take and show to one treasures of gold, and deny the other the right of searching for it. Rather, he left the earth free to all alike. How come then, if it is common, you have acres and acres of land, while your neighbor has not a portion of it?... Is it not an evil, that you alone should have the Lord's property, that you alone should enjoy what is common? Is not "the earth God's, and the fullness thereof?" If then your possessions belong to one common Lord, they belong also to our fellow-servants. The possessions of the Lord are all common.

St. John Chrysostom

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 shown towards your less fortunate brothers and sisters in Egypt ~ the brethren of the Lord. My beloved, let us continue to contemplate on:

The Blessings of Mercy to the Merciful. The Divine Inspiration mentions many blessings are bestowed upon the lives of the merciful. We continue to mention how God saved our teacher David the Prophet from the Hands of His Son Absalom:

The Divine Inspiration says, "Then Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counselor, from his city--from Giloh--while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy grew strong, for the people with Absalom continually increased in number. Now a messenger came to David, saying, 'The hearts of the men of Israel are with Absalom.' So David said to all his servants who were with him at Jerusalem, 'Arise, and let us flee, or we shall not escape from Absalom. Make haste to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly and bring disaster upon us, and strike the city with the edge of the sword.'" (2 Sam. 15:12-14).

And it came to happen-my beloved-that "So David went up by the Ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered and went barefoot. And all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went up. Then someone told David, saying, "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." And David said, 'O LORD, I pray turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!'" (2 Sam 15:30-31).

"Now when King David came to Bahurim, there was a man from the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei the son of Gera, coming from there. He came out, cursing continuously as he came. And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David. And all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. Also Shimei said thus when he cursed: 'Come out! Come out! You bloodthirsty man, you rogue! The LORD has brought upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the LORD has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom your son... Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, '... Please, let me go over and take off his head!'... And David said to Abishai and all his servants, 'See how my son who came from my own body seeks my life. How much more now may this Benjamite? Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the LORD has ordered him... Now the king and all the people who were with him became weary; so they refreshed themselves there'" (2 Sam 16:5-14).

"Moreover Ahithophel said to Absalom, 'Now let me choose twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue David tonight. I will come upon him while he is weary and weak, and make him afraid. And all the people who are with him will flee, and I will strike only the king. Then I will bring back all the people to you. When all return except the man whom you seek, all the people will be at peace.' And the saying pleased Absalom and all the elders of Israel. Then Absalom said, 'Now call Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear what he says too.' And when Hushai came to Absalom, Absalom spoke to him, saying, 'Ahithophel has spoken in this manner. Shall we do as he says? If not, speak up.' So Hushai said to Absalom: 'The advice that Ahithophel has given is not good at this time. For,' said Hushai, 'you know your father and his men, that they are mighty men, and they are enraged in their minds, like a bear robbed of her cubs in the field; and your father is a man of war, and will not camp with the people. Surely by now he is hidden in some pit, or in some other place. And it will be, when some of them are overthrown at the first, that whoever hears it will say 'There is a slaughter among the people who follow Absalom.' And even he who is valiant, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will melt completely. For all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man, and those who are with him are valiant men. Therefore I advise that all Israel be fully gathered to you, from Dan to Beersheba, like the sand that is by the sea for multitude, and that you go to battle in person. So we will come upon him in some place where he may be found, and we will fall on him as the dew falls on the ground. And of him and all the men who are with him there shall not be left so much as one. Moreover, if he

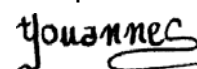
has withdrawn into a city, then all Israel shall bring ropes to that city; and we will pull it into the river, until there is not one small stone found there.' So Absalom and all the men of Israel said, 'The advice of Hushai the Archite is better than the advice of Ahithophel.' For the LORD had purposed to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring disaster on Absalom" (2 Sam 17:1-14).

"So David and all the people who were with him arose and crossed over the Jordan. By morning light not one of them was left who had not gone over the Jordan. Now when Ahithophel saw that his advice was not followed, he saddled a donkey, and arose and went home to his house, to his city. Then he put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died; and he was buried in his father's tomb. Then David went to Mahanaim. And Absalom crossed over the Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him." (2 Sam 1:22-24)

"And David numbered the people who were with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them. Then David sent out one third of the people under the hand of Joab, one third under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and one third under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said to the people, 'I also will surely go out with you myself.' But the people answered, 'You shall not go out! For if we flee away, they will not care about us; nor if half of us die, will they care about us. But you are worth ten thousand of us now. For you are now more help to us in the city.' Then the king said to them, 'Whatever seems best to you I will do.' So the king stood beside the gate, and all the people went out by hundreds and by thousands. Now the king had commanded Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, saying, 'Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom.' And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains orders concerning Absalom. So the people went out into the field of battle against Israel. And the battle was in the woods of Ephraim. The people of Israel were overthrown there before the servants of David, and a great slaughter of twenty thousand took place there that day. For the battle there was scattered over the face of the whole countryside, and the woods devoured more people that day than the sword devoured. Then Absalom met the servants of David. Absalom rode on a mule. The mule went under the thick boughs of a great terebinth tree, and his head caught in the terebinth; so he was left hanging between heaven and earth. And the mule which was under him went on. Now a certain man saw it and told Joab, and said, 'I just saw Absalom hanging in a terebinth tree!' So Joab said to the man who told him, 'You just saw him! And why did you not strike him there to the ground? I would have given you ten shekels of silver and a belt.' But the man said to Joab, 'Though I were to receive a thousand shekels of silver in my hand, I would not raise my hand against the king's son. For in our hearing the king commanded you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, 'Beware lest anyone touch the young man Absalom!' Otherwise I would have dealt falsely against my own life. For there is nothing hidden from the king, and you yourself would have set yourself against me.' Then Joab said, 'I cannot linger with you.' And he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through Absalom's heart, while he was still alive in the midst of the terebinth tree. And ten young men who bore Joab's armor surrounded Absalom, and struck and killed him. So Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing Israel. For Joab held back the people. And they took Absalom and cast him into a large pit in the woods, and laid a very large heap of stones over him. Then all Israel fled, everyone to his tent." (2 Sam 18:1-17)

Believe me, my beloved, the more we consider the poor, the more the Lord will preserve our lives. We see that this happened throughout the life of our teacher David the Prophet, as the Divine Inspiration says, "So the LORD preserved David wherever he went" (2 Sam 8:6). This was another example illustrating how God preserves the life of the merciful and we will continue with more examples in the next newsletter. May our Lord 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