



PERFECTION OF LOVE

A B L E S S U S A N E W S L E T T E R Vol. 9 No. 3

Outreach Program:

Alleviating the Impact of Poverty in Households throughout Egypt

Out of every 10 People in Egypt

- ◆ 6 people live in a rural area; 4 in Upper Egypt
- ◆ 3 have more than 3 children
- ◆ 3 are illiterate
- ◆ 4 are educated at secondary levels or below
- ◆ 4 live in a house where the head of household is illiterate
- ◆ 5 are unemployed

Out of Every 10 Poor People in Egypt

- ◆ 8 people live in a rural area; 7 in Upper Egypt
- ◆ 5 had more than 3 children
- ◆ 5 are illiterate
- ◆ 4 are educated at secondary levels or below
- ◆ 6 live in a house where the head of household is illiterate
- ◆ 5 are unemployed

The World Bank indicates that, out of every ten people living in Egypt below the poverty line, eight live in the more remote, rural areas in the country. In addition, the poorest 20% of Egypt's population only benefits from about 8.6% of the country's wealth and resources, while the richest 20% enjoys the advantage of 43.6% of Egypt's income. The rural areas where the vast majority of Egypt's impoverished population lives are afflicted with a variety of societal detriments that have long impacted their inhabitants and are currently being identified by a number of human service agencies.

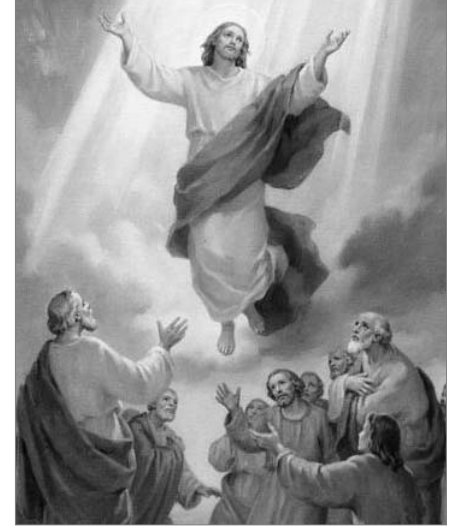
Communities throughout rural Egypt are confronted with a number of barriers to their development. There is very limited access to education in comparison to their urban counterparts – the strongest predictor of poverty. Incomes are significantly lower in these regions on average, and the absence of local industry stands in the way of both social and economic progress. The sewage and wastewater systems in villages throughout the Egyptian countryside are also in desperate need of improvement. The medical care, hygiene education, housing restoration, and food distribution services offered by the Outreach program help eliminate significant health risks to the resident populations as well as alleviate many of the problems that characterize their neighborhoods.

Dear Member

We all pray that God reward and bless your wonderful service to His Brethren. The response to our recent Marriage Assistance Campaign has been quite significant, and we pray that it continues to be so. If you are still interested in donating wedding dresses, please feel free to contact us. May Our Lord give you all the joy and blessings of the Resurrection. Please keep the service and the servants in your prayers.

Service Update

During the past Lent Season, BLESS USA servants took the blessing of visiting several congregations and community groups. On Sunday, March 12, servants presented the service of BLESS and BLESS USA to the congregation at Virgin Mary and Saint Demiana Coptic Orthodox Church in White Plains, NY. Presentations were also offered at the Coptic Orthodox Fellowship meeting at Rutgers College in New Brunswick, NJ on March 24, 2006 and at the Virgin Mary and Saint George Coptic Orthodox Church in Staten Island, NY on March 26, 2006. We also took the blessing of visiting and presenting at St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Church in Chicago, Illinois on April 2. Please continue to remember BLESS USA in your prayers throughout this blessed season as we persist in our efforts to raise awareness of the conditions of the Brethren of the Lord in Egypt.



Sayings of the Fathers

God himself has created human beings for communion or sharing with one another, by sharing Himself first of all, and by sending His Word to all men alike, and by making all things common. Therefore, everything is common, and the rich should not grasp a greater share. The expression, then, "I own something, and have more than enough; why shouldn't I enjoy it?" is neither worthy of man nor proper to the sharing of goods. It is more conformable to charity to say: "I have something; why shouldn't I share it with those in need?" Whoever says so fulfills the command: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" and is perfect. This is true luxury; the lavishness that stores up treasure; spending money on foolish desires is to be reckoned as waste, not expenditure.

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As a further motivation to give, remember that Jesus gave his all to save us. For each of us he gave his life. Because he gave up his life for us, he demands we give our lives for each other. If we owe our very lives to our brothers, shall we hoard our wealth, and keep it away from them? Shall we keep things away from each other only to have those things burn at the end of the world? But the true Christian loves his brothers! Love seeks not her own, but is diffused on the brother. ... And, as Paul tells us, love is the only thing that lasts.

Clement of Alexandria

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 - *the brethren of the Lord*. My beloved brethren let us continue to contemplate on:

The Blessings of Mercy to the Merciful

The Divine Inspiration mentions many blessings that are bestowed upon the lives of the merciful. We began contemplating the twenty-sixth blessing:

The Lord will bless him on the earth

This is among the blessings that the merciful clearly experience. As our teacher David the prophet sang, "blessed is he who considers the poor ...he will be blessed on the earth." (Ps. 41: 1,2). This psalm assures us that God will render the merciful successful, joyful and prosperous.

In two previous messages, we discussed our teacher David the prophet as well as Job the Righteous as examples. We also can mention:

Tobit the Righteous

The Holy Bible tells us about this righteous man in the book of Tobit, one of the Deuterocanonical books deleted by our brethren the Protestants, and described by one of the fathers as a "precious piece of literature."

Tobit was of the descendants of Asiel of the tribe of Naphtali (one of the twelve tribes) (Tob.1:1). It happened during the year 733 B.C. that Shalmaneser, the King of the Assyrians captured the northern cities of the Kingdom of Israel, including the land of Naphtali. The Assyrian King took all of the inhabitants of this region into captivity in the land of Assyria. (2 Kings 15:29). Tobit was among the captives from Nineveh.

Tobit had observed the laws of the Lord since his childhood (Tob. 1: 8), and did not deviate from the straight and true path despite his captivity. In permitting the temptation of Tobit through the loss of his eyesight, the Lord established Tobit as an example of patience similar to Job the Righteous. Tobit did not complain, but humbly and thankfully accepted God's will for the rest of his life.

After four years, the Lord sent His Archangel Raphael to heal Tobit. The Archangel Raphael said to Tobit, "So now when you and Sarah prayed, it was I who brought and read the record of your prayer before the glory of the Lord, and likewise whenever you would bury the dead...I was sent to you to test you. And at the same time God sent me to heal you and Sarah your daughter-in-law." (Tob.12:12-14).

Tobit was very merciful throughout his life:

- ◆ Prior to losing his eyesight, when he was a rich man:
 - + He performed many acts of charity for his kindred who had gone with him into exile. (Tob.1:3)
 - + He would hasten to Jerusalem with the first-fruits of the crops and firstlings of the flock, as well as the tithes to distribute among the strangers and the needy. (Tob.1: 6-7).
 - + He would give his food to the hungry and his clothing to the naked. If he came upon the dead body of any of his people thrown out behind the wall of Nineveh, he would bury it. (Tob.1:17).
- ◆ He was merciful during the loss of his eyesight:

Tobit did not forget his God during his temptation. He did not cease to offer almsgiving and perform good deeds through the four years of his affliction, although he himself was in need.
- ◆ He remained merciful after regaining his eyesight and his wealth:

The Divine Inspiration tells us about this period: "He was sixty-two years old when he lost his eyesight, and after regaining it he lived in prosperity, giving alms and continually blessing God and acknowledging God's majesty.

When he was about to die, he called his son Tobias and gave this command:

- ◆ "My son, I command you, serve God faithfully and do what is pleasing in His sight."
- ◆ "Do what is right and give alms, be mindful of God and bless his name at all time."
- ◆ "See what almsgiving accomplishes, and what injustice does; it brings death!" Then they laid him on his bed. Tobit died in peace at the age of one hundred and twelve.

+ How sweet is this story of this righteous man, my beloved! Indeed, it is true what Mar Isaac said: "How pleasant are the saints' tidings, they are like water to the newly seeded." My beloved, we have discussed the abundant mercifulness of Tobit. In the next message, we will continue to contemplate Tobit and his blessings upon the earth.

+ 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.

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