



PERFECTION OF LOVE

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

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Housing Program

Over 42% of Egypt's 70.5 million people reside in the country's smaller urban areas. This percentage is currently increasing at a drastically quickening pace as a result of urban migration within Egypt as large numbers of rural families abandon their agricultural communities for the larger cities in search of improved economic conditions and enhanced job prospects. However, urban life is considerably more expensive than rural, and these families often find themselves in the more destitute neighborhoods of Egypt's crowded cities. These communities are largely populated by rural migrants who continue to experience poor educational conditions, high birth rates, and high unemployment, preventing them from fully integrating themselves into the challenging metropolitan lifestyle of their new home.

Egypt underwent a notable housing construction boom in the late nineties. Yet, despite the country's crowding, many housing developments remain uninhab-

ited today. The reason for this, as indicated by many analysts, is that the construction was focused more towards the middle and upper classes, rather than the lower-income families who were more in need of adequate housing. Simultaneously, rental apartments are also becoming less accessible as the result of new legislation that causes rental units to be considerably more expensive.

Larger families are at a particular disadvantage in this situation as higher income families tend to be smaller and yet occupy larger homes and apartments. The more impoverished communities often feature larger households who can only afford smaller apartments, crowding three to four people per room. The side effects of the housing crisis are severe and include the particular hazard of mixed housing where families of different religions are constrained to live together in a single one-family apartment, usually having to share a single bathroom.



Sayings of the Fathers

Christians walk in all humility and kindness and lying is not found among them, and they truly love one another. They despise not the widow, and grieve not the orphan. Those who have, distribute liberally to those who have nothing. If they see a stranger, they bring him under their roof, and rejoice over him as if it were their own brother, for they call themselves brethren, not after the flesh but after the Spirit and in God. If any of their own passes away from this life, and another believer sees it, he provides for the burial of that poor man. If they hear that any one of their own is imprisoned or oppressed for the name of their Messiah, all of the believers provide for his needs, and if it is possible that he may be delivered, they deliver him. And if there is any among them who is poor and needy and does not have an abundance of necessities they fast two or three days that they may supply the need with the available food.

Aristides

Dear Member

During this Holy time of the Apostle's fast, we remember the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as servants to the Church. We ask that you to please keep the Brethren of the Lord and the service of BLESS USA in your prayers. Through your supplications we pray that God will strengthen the service to His beloved brethren. May the blessings of the Apostle's Fast be with you always.

Service Update

BLESS USA has taken the blessing of several churches throughout the mid-western region of the United States in recent months. On June 25, 2006, servants offered presentations to both the adult and youth congregations of St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church in St. Paul, Minnesota. In addition to helping us pursue our goals of promoting Christian concepts of love, unity and service and raising awareness of the conditions of the Brethren of the Lord in Egypt, these presentations have been wonderful opportunities to meet members throughout the country and enlarge the BLESS USA family. We ask that you continue to remember BLESS USA and the Brethren of the Lord in your prayers.

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 brethren 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 started contemplating on the twenty-sixth blessing:

The Lord will bless him on the earth

This is one of the blessings, which the merciful lived by, and was experienced by them clearly; as our teacher David the prophet sang saying, “Blessed is he who considers the poor, . . . he will be blessed on the earth.” (Ps. 41: 1,2). This means, God will make the merciful successful, joyful, and prosperous.

In the last few messages we mentioned examples of our Teacher David the Prophet as well as Job the Righteous. We also started and will continue speaking about:

Tobit the Righteous

Tobit was very merciful all his life. . . he was merciful before loosing his eyesight. . . while he was rich. . . and he was merciful during the loss of his eyesight while he was in need. . . and also he was merciful after gaining his eyesight back while he was wealthy.

Tobit the merciful experienced how God made him blessed on earth. . . so he was successful, joyful, and prosperous.

◆ He was a Successful Man:

The Divine Inspiration says, “And because he was mindful of the Lord with all his heart, God gave him favour in the sight of Salmanasar the king. And he gave him leave to go whithersoever he would, with liberty to do whatever he had a mind.” (Tob. 1: 13-14). . . See, my beloved, how Tobit was a successful man, because he remembered God with all his heart and he was merciful. So God gave him favor in the eyes of the King and he bestowed on him every good thing. Also, he allowed him to go anywhere and do whatever he wants (although he was a captive).

The Divine Inspiration continues, “He therefore went to all that were in captivity and gave them wholesome admonitions.” (Tob. 1:15). . . “Tobias daily went among all his kindred, comforted them, and distributed to every one as he was able, out of his goods: He fed the hungry, and gave clothes to the naked, and was careful to bury the dead, and they that were slain.” (Tob.1: 19,20)

He was a merciful and successful man.

◆ He was a joyful man:

Tobit was a happy man, thanking God all the days of his life. . . even when God allowed the test of blindness to strike him. The Divine Inspiration says, “For whereas he had always feared God from his infancy, and kept his commandments, he repined not against God because the evil of blindness had befallen him, but continued immovable in the fear of God, giving thanks to God all the days of his life. For as the kings insulted his holy job, so his relations and kinsmen mocked at his life, saying: ‘Where is thy hope, for which thou gavest alms,

and buriedst the dead?’ But Tobias rebuked them, saying: “Speak not so, for we are the children of the saints, and look for that life which God will give to those that never change their faith from him.” (Tob.2: 13-18).

The days and years passed, and the Lord sent His Archangel Rafael to heal Tobit and give him back his sight. Then Tobit blessed God saying, “I bless Thee, O Lord God of Israel, because Thou hast chastised me, and Thou hast saved me: and behold I see Tobias my son.” (Tob. 11:17).

After this, his daughter-in-law Sara came back and all the family arrived safely, along with the cattle, and the camels and an abundance of money . . . “And for seven days they feasted and rejoiced all with great joy.” (Tob. 11:21).

He was a merciful and joyful man.

◆ He was a prosperous man:

For God blessed his money, and he was rich before loosing his eyesight. . . The Divine Inspiration mentions, “And when amongst a great multitude of his kindred, he saw Gabelus in want, who was one of his tribe, taking a note of his hand he gave him the aforesaid sum of money.” “I tell thee also, my son, that I lent ten talents of silver, while thou wast yet a child, to Gabelus, in Rages a city of the Medes, and I have a note of his hand with me” (Tobit 1:17-4:21). And also, “Tobias daily went among all his kindred, and comforted them, and distributed to every one as he was able, out of his goods” (Tobit 1:19).

After he lost his eyesight, his son got married to Sara his brother’s daughter. His brother was so rich also, and Tobias returned to his father and Tobit got healed. Days past and Sara reached her father-in-law’s house with all her cattle, and the camels, and an abundance of money of his wife’s: and that money also which he had received of Gabelus. (Tobit 11:18). And God blessed Tobit’s money after gaining his eyesight. . . and he did many merciful deeds.

God did not bless his money only, but He blessed also his son Tobias. The Divine Inspiration mentioned, “And Raguel went to him, and kissed him with tears and weeping upon his neck, said, “A blessing be upon thee, my son, because thou art the son of a good and most virtuous man.” (Tobit 7:7)

“And when he was come into Raguel’s house he found Tobias sitting at the table and he leaped up, and they kissed each other and Gabelus wept, and blessed God, And said: “The God of Israel bless thee, because thou art the son of a very good and just man, and that feareth God, and doth almsdeeds, and may a blessing come upon thy wife and upon your parents.

And may you see your children, and your children’s children, unto the third and fourth generation, and may the God of Israel, who reigneth forever and ever, bless your seed.” (Tobit 9:8-11)

He was a merciful and prosperous man.

Contemplate, my beloved, in how Tobit was blessed on earth, how he was successful and joyful –even when he lost his eyesight. Contemplate how much God blessed him in his money and his son.

Truly these are the blessings of Mercy to the Merciful

+ My beloved, believe me when I tell you that inasmuch as we consider the poor, the Lord will bless us upon this 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.

Bishop Youannes
Youannes

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