



Celebrating 44 Years



S E R V I N G T H E B R E T H R E N O F T H E L O R D

As we celebrate the 44th anniversary of BLESS, we look back and contemplate on the purposes for which this service was formed, the need for such service, and its importance in our lives. In doing so, we reflect upon the words of our spiritual leaders past and present, through whom the Holy Spirit works to provide countless blessings.

I T S P U R P O S E



His Holiness Pope Kyrollos VI

It has come to the attention of the Church that the social and economic condition of some of her beloved children has deteriorated. Families that were doing well for themselves in the past are now living in poverty. These children need to be cared for, they need to be clothed and fed. They need spiritual guidance which leads to the inner peace of every individual and promotes the stability of the family. Social conditions, in general, have worsened. Many have strayed away from the Church...We are responsible for all of these people. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the decision was made to ordain our blessed Father Makari El-Souriany as Bishop Samuel in order that he may organize a general and social service for the people, to care for our expatriate sons and daughters and to build relations with other churches.

"Lift up and stretch out your hands, not to heaven but to the poor; for if you stretch out your hands to the poor, you have reached the summit of heaven. But if you lift up your hands in prayer without sharing with the poor, it is worth nothing ... Every family should have a room where Christ is welcomed in the person of the hungry and thirsty stranger. The poor are a greater temple than the sanctuary; this altar the poor, you can raise up anywhere, on any street, and offer the liturgy at any hour." - St. John Chrysostom

I T S I M P O R T A N C E I N O U R L I V E S

His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

Although you have your prayers, contemplations and hymns, if you are not merciful, you will find no mercy on the Last Day when you stand before God who will say "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." (Matt 9:13). In the final judgment, there will be no mercy to those who were not merciful but, "blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (Matt 5:7).

The Lord uses this measure when He deals with people, whether mercy with respect to worldly material matters such as hunger, thirst and illness, or with spiritual affairs. In all cases He gave a final decision saying "with the same measure you use, it will be measured to you and to you who hear, more will be given," (Mark 4:24). If you deal mercifully with people, God will do the same with you...

This is why the Holy Bible says "Blessed is he who considers the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble." (Ps 41:1). On the other hand He says "Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, will also cry himself and not be heard." (Prov 21:13). Your mercy to others precedes you and intercedes for you before God. If you show mercy to others, God will be merciful towards you. But if you are harsh and fierce, do not protest if you receive the same treatment.



ITS PURPOSE

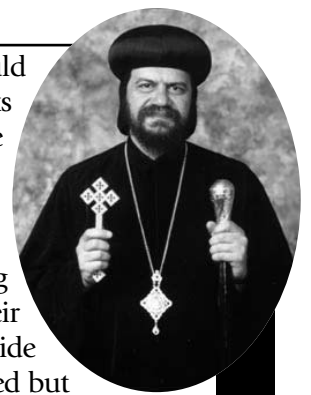


Let us conduct our lives in a moderate fashion so as to invest our resources in endeavors that create opportunities for those in need to elevate themselves to a higher level while maintaining their dignity. In doing so, the gaps between each level of society gradually become narrower so that social justice can be achieved.

The Church must pray fervently for such a goal. She must share with her children, sacrifice for them, foster relief and development projects, support peace and solve problems. The Church-whenever she does all these things-works according to her nature, expresses her life and witnesses to her message.

His Grace the Late Bishop Samuel (1962-1981)

ITS NEED



Respecting the poor means we should consider every person who seeks help...[as if] we are actually serving the Lord in the person of the poor.

The poor are not only in need of temporary solutions but also of a lasting remedy which eradicates the root of their misery and hardship. We may provide contributions that meet temporary need but what is the following step? The hungry need food but they also need to learn how to get it. Instead of giving the hungry man a fish, teach him "how to catch it".

Man consists of body soul and spirit- we cannot favor any one part over the other. The Church is responsible for the human being as a whole. Economic, social and health conditions have a direct effect on spiritual well-being.

(1985-1995)

His Grace Bishop Serapion

ITS IMPORTANCE

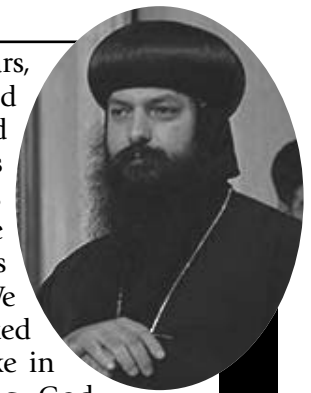


There are three important points to remember when speaking of the Brethren of the Lord, or the people who are in need. They are highlighted in the Gospel of St. Matthew:

1. Everyone who is in need truly is God's brother & sister: *"Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren"* (Matt 25:40). When a person in need comes to me, do I treat him/her as God's brother or sister?
2. When I give a person in need \$20, I am truly giving God Himself, not the person: *"Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me"* (Matt 25:40).
3. When we give to God, we are actually giving back to Him what He gave us. When I give, God may thank me, but I should reply saying: *"But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand."* (1 Chronicles 29:14). When we give to God, we are actually giving to God back from what He originally gave us. We take from His hand and give back into His other hand.

His Grace Bishop Youannes (1995-Present)

ITS BLESSINGS



Throughout its 44 years, BLESS has experienced firsthand the manifold blessings of this precious service. Its headquarters remain at the Patriarchate at St. Mark's Cathedral in Cairo. We also who live in the United States are able to partake in the blessings of serving God Himself though His brethren. BLESS USA functions to support the activities and programs of the Agape Charity Department, the division of the Social Services branch of the Bishporic that serves only the Brethren of the Lord - those in most urgent need. BLESS - both in Egypt and the United States - operates under the guidance and direct supervision of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, along with His Grace Bishop Youannes in Egypt and His Grace Bishop David at the Archdiocese of North America in Cedar Grove, New Jersey.

His Grace Bishop David (1999-Present)