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## COMMITTED SERVICE INSTILLS FULFILLING HAPPINESS *By H.G. BISHOP YOUSSEF*

The tie that binds both happiness and spiritual service is a fundamentally simple one, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive*" (Acts 20:35). The Lord Jesus Christ not only taught giving; but His very life demonstrated emphatically that serving others is an essential component of spiritual happiness. A person may have unprecedented gifts and talents; but if they choose not to share them with others, those gifts and talents will not bring about the expected fulfillment. "*There are diversities of gifts but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities but it is the same God Who works in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all*" (I Corinthians 12:4-7).

**The first step** towards an enriched, fulfilling service to God is to recognize that gifts and talents are ultimately God's and His alone. They should not be considered yours neither by you nor by others. No two servants possess exactly the same identical gifts. God's plan is to assimilate all the infinite number of gifts and talents He has distributed to us all, and make them function together as one.

**The second step** towards a happy blessed service is resolved in making a commitment to share our gifts and talents with others. Having the desire to serve is certainly essential; but without determination, desire is like a candle without a flame. Wishful thinking alone does not make service burn brightly with productivity and success. Rather, commitment extends desire into unconditional, faithful, seven day a week service. Hard working, progressively moving, validated service turns into a labor of love with committed dedicated servants.

**The third step** in full commitment to His service is having the right attitude in reflecting our gifts and talents. The essential question concerning attitude is, "Does my attitude, supported by my actions, spiritually encourage others to share their gifts and talents, furthering and ensuring the growth of the Church?" Our commitment and non-condescending attitude towards living a righteous life will eventually lead others to follow our example in desiring the Lord Jesus Christ as Master of their life away from sin and its bitterness. We must be ever watchful and introspective as servants "*...for who is greater, he who sits at the table or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves*" (Luke 22:27).

**The fourth step** is finding spiritual satisfaction in service. Servants should have service as the utmost important source of their happiness. Giving unto others what God has given unto you, becomes to your soul its breath, purpose, and joy. Salty lakes are self contained, with water pouring only internally. Fresh lakes, on the other hand, receive and give fresh water, causing their waters to be really fresh and refreshing. So is the case with service. If it is not contained; but reaching out to others then it becomes refreshing; bringing forth happiness to the giver as well as the receiver. It is humbling to constantly keep before our eyes the fact that perfection is a quality possessed by only One earthly person, our Lord Jesus Christ. There was no royal fanfare for His miracles; nor was His service motivated by fear. There were even very few who had said "thank-you". He served until He went on the cross. Let us all be thankful to God for bestowing upon us precious gifts and talents and may He make us worthy to commit them to His Service.

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# UPCOMING RETREATS AT ST. MINA'S ~ 2010

February 4 – 6 Family Retreat

March 8 – 9 Retreat – Commemoration of the Feast of Pope Kyrollos VI

April 15 - 17 Family Retreat

## SPIRITUAL EXERCISES WHILE FASTING *BY H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III*

To have a powerful effect on your spiritual life during Lent, there are certain exercises which will help you benefit from your fast:

◇ To exercise giving up a specific sin, from the sins that prevail upon you, and which is repeated in many of your confessions.

◇ To exercise learning some Psalms from the Agpeya. You may choose one or two Psalms from each of the seven prayers, especially the Psalms that leave an effect on you.

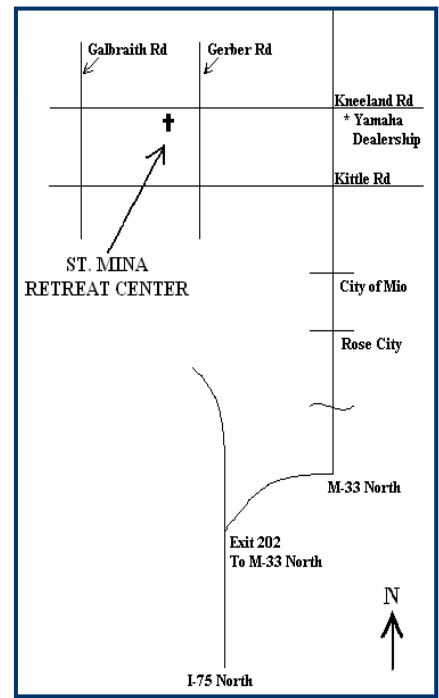
◇ To exercise learning the Bible readings of the different hours, divide them into parts, analyze them, knowing that for each prayer there are three or six parts.

◇ To exercise the mental prayer of what you have learned. You may pray during work, on the road, while with people or at any time.

◇ There are many spiritual exercises in the field of dealing with people...

such as gentleness, patience, enduring others' weaknesses, controlling anger, using words of praise and encouragement, serving and helping others, kindness and meekness.

◇ Other exercises in purity of the heart: Such as modesty, inner peace, love of God, being satisfied without grumbling, quietness with no disturbance, internal joy in the spirit, faith and hope



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