



PERFECTION OF LOVE

A B L E S S U S A N E W S L E T T E R Vol. 12 No. 4

Education

Proverbs 9:9 "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning."

The luxury of educational advancement is not available to some of our brothers and sisters in Egypt. Those in need are suffering from the lack of education. This lack of education promotes additional problems, one of which is poverty. There is a direct link between the lack of education and poverty in Egypt. In a study on the progress of Egypt performed by the World Bank (2000), it was found that more than 46 percent of people living in poverty were illiterate, and 40 percent enjoyed only a basic education or less. Many studies suggest that poverty rates decrease significantly when education levels rise. Accordingly, it is imperative that education access and quality become cornerstones of the campaign against poverty in Egypt.

In many cases, the Brethren of the Lord are forced to adopt alternative lifestyles to make ends meet. For instance, they work longer hours or take on second and third jobs. Their children are often made to leave school and are forced to work at a young age. This continues the lack of education, which, in turn, perpetuates the cycle of poverty.

BLESS has set up the Education Program because education is an important factor in reducing the poverty rate and positively impacting individuals' lives. Although education in Egypt is free, there are significant private expenses associated with it at every stage of instruction, making education unattainable for the Brethren of the Lord.

Education brings freedom and renewal to each individual, an opportunity to unlock potential and realize dreams, and prepares each individual to contribute to the development of their society as a whole. May the Lord bless you for supporting the education of our Lord's brethren.

Dear Members,

During the beginning of the new school year, we ask that you keep all the Brethren of the Lord, in particular those who are students, in your prayers. Please remember that during this time of year, BLESS pays for school fees, uniforms and text books for the Brethren. May Our Savior bless their year with success and joy for the glory of His Holy Name.

Service Updates...

H.G. Bishop Youannes met with the servants of BLESS USA on September 26th. His Grace discussed in great detail many examples of saints and modern day servants who have received the blessings of serving the brethren. His Grace also meditated on our eternal life and the importance of focusing on the eternal instead of the earthly.



Sayings of the Fathers

Let us consider everything as secondary to the provident care we should take of our children, and to our "bringing them up with the training and instruction benefiting the Lord" (Eph 6:4). If from the very beginning they are taught to be a lover of true wisdom, then they have acquired a wealth superior to all other wealth and a glory superior to all other glory...If you desire to make them rich, do this. For the rich man is not he who desires many riches and is encircled with abundant wealth, but he who has need of nothing. Discipline your children in this, teach them this. These are the greatest riches. Do not seek how to give them reputation and high fame in profane learning, but consider deeply how you will teach them to despise the glory that belongs to this present life. In this way they will become more distinguished and more truly glorious. This is possible for the poor man and the rich man alike to accomplish...

St. John Chrysostom
Homily XXI. 2,
On the Letter to the Ephesians

Spiritual Message

Reverend Fathers, beloved brethren, and friends of BLESS USA,

May the peace, love, and blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ unite us all. Beloved brethren, I would like to thank your abounding hearts as we have received your loving offerings for your brothers and sisters, the Brethren of the Lord, in Egypt this past period.

We shall continue my beloved brethren our contemplations on:

The Blessings of Mercy to the Merciful

The blessings of mercy in the lives of the merciful indeed are countless. We have contemplated upon twenty-seven of these blessings, and we began our contemplation on the twenty-eighth blessing. We will continue to contemplate on this blessing:

"The Lord will strengthen him on his bed of illness. He will sustain him on his sickbed."

This is one of the blessings of mercy which the merciful directly experience in their lives. Our teacher David the Psalmist chanted: "Blessed is he who considers the poor; The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will strengthen him on his bed of illness; You will sustain him on his sickbed" (Psalm 41:1, 3).

My beloved, in the last newsletter we explained how this profoundly comforting blessing is a source of great joy, for the Lord strengthens and sustains everyone who considers and looks affectionately towards those who are impoverished. He sustains the merciful when they are painfully confined to their sickbeds. The Psalmist of Israel elaborates, "You will sustain him [in every way] on his sickbed," exemplifying how the Lord prepares spiritual, psychological, physical and financial matters for the merciful and additionally arranges for someone to serve them on their bed of illness... "You will sustain him [in every way] on his sickbed [in his illness]"

We have mentioned, my beloved brethren, examples of merciful people who lived and experienced this blessing:

1. Our teacher David, the merciful prophet who recited this timeless psalm.
2. Tobit, the merciful and righteous.

We also call to mind:

3. Our teacher Saint Paul the Apostle

Our teacher Saint Paul the Apostle was very merciful. We spoke in the previous message of the great extent to which he carefully tended to the service of the less fortunate and its organization, even to the point of referring to the less fortunate as saints in several of his epistles...and also to the point that he commanded compassion, mercy and generosity in giving to the less fortunate on many occasions in his epistles.

We will proceed to contemplate on the extent to which our teacher Saint Paul the Apostle experienced this blessing throughout his lifetime and his ministry:

First: In the City of Lystra

The Divine Inspiration says: *"And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, 'Stand up straight on your feet!' And he leaped and walked. Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, 'The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!' And Barnabas they called*

Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out and saying, 'Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.' And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them. Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe" (Acts 14:8-20).

This story is very amazing my beloved, as Saints Paul and Barnabas were highly honored for healing a man crippled from his mother's womb. They were so exceedingly honored that the crowds cried out saying that the gods took the likeness of people and intended to offer a sacrifice to them (being deities). Nevertheless, these two apostles tore their clothes exhorting the crowds and preventing them with great difficulty from sacrificing to both of them. Shortly thereafter, the Jews from Antioch and Iconium spoke to these same crowds and convinced them to stone Paul...What could this be?...What is happening here?... Could they actually go about stoning Paul when they were just about to sacrifice to him?!! And so it was...and stone St. Paul they did. They dragged him out of the city counting him for dead...

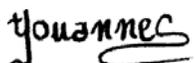
The crowds believed he had died because the eyes of their hearts did not perceive; they did not observe the compassionate hand of God which sustains and delivers all who consider and show mercy to the less fortunate. The Lord not only sustains the merciful when they are painfully confined to their sickbeds but also prepares spiritual, psychological, physical and financial matters for them...

We continue to see what unfolded with St. Paul, **the merciful**, of whom the Divine Inspiration says, *"They stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead."* HOWEVER *"when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe"* (Acts 14:19, 20).

The merciful experience this blessing so often in their lives...i.e. that the Lord sustains and delivers them as they are on their sickbed and even prepares their every way during their ailment. These are the blessings of mercy throughout the days of the merciful.

+ *Beloved, may we meet again on the pages of the next message and continue contemplating the ways through which our teacher St. Paul, the merciful apostle, experienced this blessing throughout his days and his ministry...*

+ *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