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THE SHEPHERD OF SHEPHERDS

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“Now there was in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold an Angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the City of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2: 8-17) The angels announced the miraculous and wondrous birth of the Lord Jesus Christ to lowly and simple shepherds in a field watching over their sheep. This glorious announcement was not made to the richest of kings or the esteemed high priests. And the Lord Jesus Christ Himself would come to be called the “Shepherd of Shepherds”. What was the significance of announcing the reconciliation of humanity to God and people to each other beginning with the shepherds in the Holy Gospel of St. Luke? Sheep are perhaps the most important animal in the Holy Bible as they are mentioned over 400 hundred times. Shepherding a flock of sheep and goats meant moving their flocks to new pastures in search of sustenance, ensuring an abundant and clean water supply, and constantly seeking out the lost. The shepherd’s responsibilities further included guarding the sheep from the attacks of predators and wild animals such as bears, lions, and wolves often placing their own lives in danger to protect their flocks. Shepherding a flock was not the most glorious of occupations and may perhaps have even been frowned upon by more civilized populations. The prophets Moses, David, and Amos all worked as shepherds during some part of their lifetime. King David in his rejoicing and wisdom wrote that the Lord was his Shepherd in the 23rd Psalm also known as the Sacramental Psalm. “*The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures*” (Psalm 23:1-2). David the Prophet believed with the Lord as our True Shepherd we are not lacking. He will take care of us, manage our lives, and make it beneficial and fruitful in much the same manner only greater than the Old Testament shepherds cared for and nurtured their sheep. The welfare of the flock was entirely dependent upon the management afforded them by their shepherd. But the words of David the Prophet seem to imply a deeper meaning than simply “not lacking”. They mean contentment. We do not desire anything more in our lives than the Lord Jesus Christ. In the New Testament the Lord Jesus Christ reiterated this when He said to the rich young ruler who wished to become His follower, “*Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor and come follow Me*” (Mark 10:21). The social behavior of sheep is such that they will not lie down until they are free of all fear, are at peace with each other, are free from pestilence, and are free of hunger. The shepherd must provide these things for his flock to enable them to lie down in green pastures. The shepherd realizes that anxiety ridden flocks will not do well and will exhibit agitation, discontent, and restlessness. The Lord Jesus Christ was born in humbleness and would grow in His humanity to exhibit meekness, patience, and submission to the Father, just as the sheep exhibits to their shepherd. The relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ is the same as that demonstrated by the shepherd to its flocks. The Lord Jesus Christ would grow in spirit and truth and be the Shepherd of Shepherds not seeing His flock as sinners to be condemned as the Jewish leaders of His day who acted as wolves among the sheep, but viewed sinners as harassed, helpless and lost sheep to be found and brought back safely home. In the Holy Gospel of St. John, chapter 10 the Lord Jesus Christ uses a parable illustrating salvation with the symbolism of a shepherd and his sheep. In verse 7, the Lord Jesus Christ calls Himself the Shepherd or “Door”. “*Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the Door of the sheep*” (John 10:7). The Lord is saying no one can enter the door except by way of Him. In conclusion, the Lord Jesus Christ was not born within a royal palace, but within humble surroundings in a manger. His birth would be announced to lowly shepherds that sought Him out. He did not force His birth upon us. He did not coerce His way into our lives after His Holy birth. Rather He led the way to eternal salvation for those who would but follow. He compassionately taught through parables, miracles, and personal sacrifice introducing Christianity into sinful and troubled hearts. He was The Shepherd who went ahead of His sheep. He did not drive them from behind. He led them beside that which was good away from danger and sin. His birth would restore the soul of all and His earthly ministry would guide the obedient toward eternal righteousness. His birth would revitalize our souls and in times of darkness and trouble He will offer consolation to all the faithful. The Holy birth of the Shepherd of Shepherds would be the door which would permit us to enter and dwell in the House of the Lord forever.

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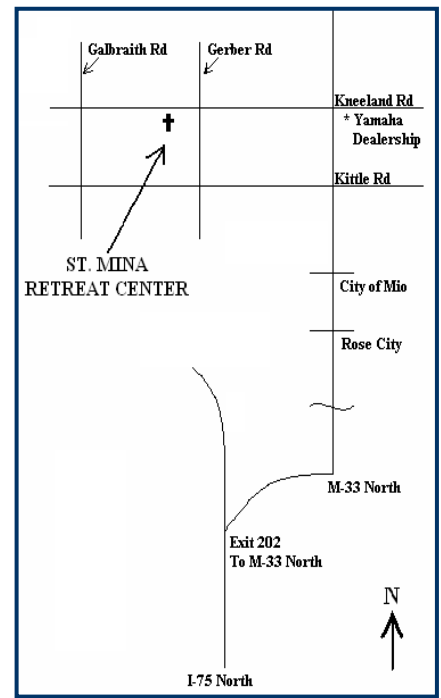
UCOMING EVENTS AT ST. MINA'S ~ 2010

- ❖ November 4-6 Monthly Retreat
- ❖ November 24 Retreat (Celebration of the Feast of St. Mina)

CHOIR RETREAT

AUGUST 26-28, 2010

A group of 24 church choir members gathered together to spend a spiritual retreat at St. Mina's Retreat Center. Upon their arrival, they held a prayer and the following day was started with the Prayer of the Unction of the Sick. Afterwards, the group benefitted from a Spiritual lesson with Abouna Mina and had an open question and answer session where many topics were discussed, such as how to live as real Christians and how to guide others around us to embrace a Christian life. The choir members also spent time practicing singing. Another spiritual meeting took place in the afternoon and there was free time for sports and activities outdoors, such as volleyball and enjoying the lake. After dinner, the evening was spent praying the Asheya prayers and then everyone gathered outside around the fire singing spiritual songs and enjoying each other's company. On Saturday morning, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated followed by a delicious brunch. The attendees had a wonderful time gathering in spiritual fellowship and enjoying the beautiful scenery and activities available at the retreat center. The group benefitted from the time to ponder on many spiritual topics together and increase in friendship and faith.



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