



## **Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States**

**Bishop Youssef**

*My Beloved Youth,*

*May the good will and mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ abide in your heart.*

The Lord Jesus Christ taught much about giving and kindness to the poor. "Sell what you have and **give alms**; provide yourself with money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the Heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:33-34). "But rather **give alms of such things as you have**; then indeed all things are clean to you" (Luke 11:41). "But love your enemies, **do good, and lend**, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore **be merciful**, just as your Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:35-36).

These teachings were considered so important that they were further evident in the apostles' teachings. St Paul in his farewell address to the priests of Ephesus admonished, "And remember the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He said, it is **better to give than receive**" (Acts 20:35). St. Paul wrote to St. Timothy "Command those who are rich in this present age. . .that they be rich in good works, **ready to give, willing to share**, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold of Eternal Life" (I Timothy 6:17-19).

The Holy Book of Acts described the early church life at that time, "And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses **sold them**, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need" (Acts 4:33-35). As the number of believers increased the amount of donations and contributions increased. Donating to the church was evident since its establishment, as an essential part of its ministry and remains so until today.

Cyprian writes, "Let us consider, beloved brethren, what the congregation of believers did in the time of the apostles. Back then, at the beginning, the mind flourished with greater virtues. The faith of the believers burned with a warmth of faith that was still new. Back then they sold houses and farms and gladly and generously presented the proceeds to the apostles, to be distributed to the poor."

Children of God should give generously according to their ability. When entering into a professional capacity following graduation one should always remember that not only are rich people asked to give but everyone without distinction, are asked to give. "Therefore as we have opportunity let us **do good to all**, especially those who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

When we give we should freely give for it is written, "He who sows sparingly, reaps sparingly and he who sows **bountifully** will also reap bountifully" (II Corinthians 9:6).

*May the generosity of the Christians in the early church be an example for us all.*

God bless you,

His Grace Bishop Youssef

Bishop, Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States