



Bishop Youssef

COPTIC ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES



Our Beloved, the Blessed Children of the Holy Church,

Peace and grace from our God and Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ.

It gives us great pleasure to see how the Church's children living abroad are greatly concerned about helping our needy brothers and sisters in Egypt, especially the orphans. We find that it is written in the Holy Bible, ***"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world"*** (James 1:27).

We pray that the Lord may bless your offerings and efforts towards helping your needy and suffering brothers and sisters in Egypt.

However, we would like to caution against the spread of a phenomenon that is strange to the biblical teachings, as well as foreign to the spirit of our beloved Church. **We are referring to how some charity organizations in the United States print the pictures of some of our sons and daughters the orphans in Egypt, for the sake of inviting the Church's children to financially support them.** How will these orphans, whose pictures or life stories are printed in advertisement or in correspondence for the sake of collecting donations, feel when they grow up and discover how those organizations took advantage of their need and misery? Would anyone of us allow for the pictures of his son or daughter to be printed in magazines for the purpose of collecting money? Aren't those innocent children also our sons and daughters?

The Holy Bible warns us against the abuse of orphans or widows, as it is written, ***"You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child"*** (Exodus 22:22). The Holy Bible warns us against oppressing them, ***"Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor"*** (Zechariah 7:10). We should note that emotional abuse and injustice are not less than material oppression.

God honors the orphans and calls Himself their Father, ***"A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy habitation"*** (Psalm 68:5).

There is a huge difference between a person, who loves the orphans, respects their feelings, visits them, and offers them not only financial help, but also his love and compassion, and between one, who abuses the orphans by printing their pictures in magazines or in reports.

Many of the families of those orphan children ask for help, because of their need, and they expect from those who help them to conceal it and not print their pictures in magazines.

This brings to our memory the great charitable saints, e.g. Saint Nicholas and Saint Sarapamoun the veiled, who were sensitive towards the feelings of those whom they helped, that they did not reveal



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themselves to them, so that the recipients would feel that the help came from God and not from a human being.

We bring to the attention of those in charge of those charitable organizations that they should remember that those powerless orphans have a strong God, Who defends and protects them, “**Lord, You will cause Your ear to hear, to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may oppress no more**” (Psalm 10:17-18).

In order to respect the feelings of our sons and daughters the orphans, we call on all the Church’s children to reject this non-Christian method of helping the orphans and not to encourage those non-ecclesiastical organizations.

May our Lord bless your lives.

Bishop Youssef
Bishop Serapion