

*Haigazian University Fiftieth Anniversary
COMMENCEMENT
Pavillon Royal, BIEL
Friday, July 1, 2005 - 6:30 PM*

Word of Welcome

The joy of celebrating the Golden Jubilee of Haigazian University reaches its peak today as we graduate a record number of students in our fifty-year history.

In this ceremony, we have the special privilege of honoring our special role in this world. Having been born just a few decades after the Armenian Genocide as a resilient institutional response to death and dispersement, I stand in awe before the memory of a million and a half martyrs of our nation, among whom Armenag Haigazian himself.

As faithful descendants of a victimized nation, our parents and grandparents chose life, and with hope they built all that they could in Armenian, the Near East, the USA and elsewhere.

An Armenian population (and within it the Armenian Evangelical Church) that prided itself in dozens of institutions of higher learning in our Cilician Armenian homeland less than a century ago, today witnesses the increasing pride in this one Armenian owned university in the Diaspora. Haigazian University stands not like an orphan, however, but as a living monument, as a memorial fountain of life. Through God's grace we exist.

Haigazian, therefore, enjoys the heavy and joyful responsibility of representing the best that Armenian identity could bring to the whole Diaspora. And the best Armenian testimony has been the one service, of giving, and of cultural and intellectual exchange. And history will witness that it is not a coincidence that Lebanon has been home to Haigazian University. The rich heritage of Lebanon, its diverse communal life, its openness to the world, and its bridging character of antiquity and modernity have made the Haigazian reality possible.

Through the fifty year Haigazian University experience, let history register that

- No matter what the size the supporting community is, vision and mission get us to the heights of human endeavor.
- That loyalty to our identity and our sense of belonging have; no geographical boundaries.
- That cultures and nations can learn from each other without absorbing each other.
- That Lebanon cannot be united only by agreements, pacts, but that the goal of each person and community has to be centered on how to contribute to the others and the other communities. You can give only if you own, and you know you own.

For all of these reasons, Haigazian University continues to aim at the heights of life in fullness as we read in scriptures. We want to share with all..., learn from all. We want our students to grow in spirit, mind and body, so that they may be prepared for the future with competence, skill, and character.

Let history record, Haigazian University has brought the Armenians to the heights of life, in lands of Arab humanity, with values of American education.

The Class of 2005 is our new gift to the world.

Thank you.