

FOUNDERS' DAY

HAIGAZIAN CELEBRATION

October 14, 2002

12:00 PM

### **President's Address**

Every year around this time we celebrate two inaugurations.

- First, we celebrate the fact that in 1955, the founders of Haigazian turned a vision for the preparation of the next generation into an institutional structure thousands of students have benefited from up to this day.
- Second, we celebrate the opening of a new academic year in God's grace, and this is our 48th. It promises to be a year of celebration, for during the next months the planning for our 50th anniversary will start.

For these two reasons we celebrate today being together at Haigazian and having Haigazian at our service.

While there is plenty to celebrate in our lives, I am well aware that there is also much that does not call for celebration. In your lives and ours, there is doubt about a viable future, a negative view of the state of humanity, pessimism about introducing beneficial change into the value systems and operational policies of our country, and there are many more reasons to be critical of the world outside us. And you, young people, are better than others in both hoping as well as criticizing.

Instead of suggesting solutions for problems or mourning about our state of affairs, I want to remain faithful to the mood of celebration and I assure you that there are enough reasons at HU to turn life together here into a celebration.

Specifically for this year, I invite you to be mindful of a number of values that are true to our calling of Haigazian.

I invite you to celebrate these values attached to our founders, and be confident that in these values you will find a rich heritage and a resourceful help for human dignity and integrity.

1. One of the ills of our society is the lack of emphasis on personal opinion.

What do you think?

People are being taught to be neutral in everything, with no opinion, with no unique point of view, and no sense of responsibility for their perspectives or for their life. People are invited to become good followers but not leading minds. This is a loss for us.

In the face of all that, I invite you to become persons of opinion as university students. I do not invite you to take sides on already existing divisive issues or imitate others in how they deal with their causes, but I invite you to form your opinion on what is good out there and what is not, what is healthy out there and what is not, what is just and fair and what is not.

2. Another ill of society is the cheap invitation to only look for instant success. A characteristic of young people is to have visions and hopes and to develop plans. What is your dream? First, I invite you to be young people of dreams for your future, but beyond that I invite you to develop a vision in which there is place for others as well, for your immediate surrounding, your country, the whole world.

3. A third ill of society is to seek and love people of your own tribe. Lebanon, is known as the country of coexistence in which we all exist for ourselves and for our groups. I invite you at Haigazian to learn to exist not simply with others but also to exist for them and with them. I invite you to respect others, appreciate the beautiful in them, and learn to listen to various points of view. We live not simply to receive

but also to give. Let me then ask, what is there that you can give others around you at Haigazian that could enrich their lives or make them appreciate life better? Give just that to each other.

4. And finally, all you may initially expect to get at Haigazian is a degree in order to find a job and develop a career. But I invite you to have a higher vision than that. I invite you, while getting an education, to give time to detail, and to consider every single piece of knowledge with careful attention and interest. Learn to ask questions to each other and to your instructors. Allow others to question you as well. You are invited to meet more than the minimum requirement, more than the satisfactory. In order to be good, look for excellence. In order to get a degree, work for a higher goal. Seek the best and you will be thankful for what you will achieve. In all of this do not think too highly of yourselves. We all remain humans before a great God and humans before other equally valuable humans.

Let's celebrate these values and ideals this year, and may each of us also be a founder of some sort. Let us add solid bricks to each other's educational journey. Enjoy the year,...and smile, at least the speech is over.

*Paul Haidostian*