

*Founders' Day
Haigazian University
October 13, 2003*

President's Message

With a rather formal word of greeting I salute you dear members of the faculty and staff, Board members, members of the Alumni and the Women's auxiliary, our dear guest, Dr. Ahmad Al-Jammal, and especially students new and old who represent the beating heart of the university.

The Founders' Day celebration today serves a dual purpose at Haigazian University. First, it is our way of launching a new academic year. And second, at the start of the year we wish to rekindle with thanks the vision of those who prepared the way for the next generation. It is our rootedness in history, and our gratitude for God's gifts of the past and the present that give us energy and perspective for the future.

This year is the 49th academic year at Haigazian, the year that precedes the 50th anniversary celebrations. But for those who have read their history, our heritage is longer than 150 years, taking into consideration the rich history of the Armenian Evangelicals in higher education.

The focus of my word on this occasion, however, is one.

I want to highlight the necessity of depth in learning which I would like to contrast with mere success.

In a competitive and global competitive market, the emphasis is usually and wrongly put on the attainment of high degrees, attractive titles, and instant success. The global educational crisis has led us to neither value degrees earned, nor programs completed. All are often inflated and devaluated. Thus, one finds owners of doctoral degrees who have no common sense, or university graduates who cannot compose one coherent paragraph, or masters of this and masters of that who cannot relate to humans as humans.

This devaluation we all mourn. But it is important to highlight at least one component of the solution. I call for discovering depth in learning. After all, what lasts in life is depth. Depth of learning, depth of thinking, depth of feeling, depth of relationships, depth of faith, and depth of perception.

I would like to challenge ourselves at Haigazian University to focus on depth, in addition to the necessary degree of breadth in knowledge. What we learn should do something to us, change us, empower us, and deepen our appreciation for all aspects of life. Let our and other universities compete with each other not in obtaining governmental recognition of degrees, but in becoming havens of deep learning.

Dear students, people may hire you for your degree, but they will graciously keep you in your position for your depth and dedication.

People may accommodate you for your name or connections, but will befriend you for your personality.

It is depth we deeply search for.

I would like to challenge you all, and I include myself in this that there is much more we ourselves can do and give starting in this 49th academic year if we want Haigazian University to build further on its high reputation, believing that there is benefit for each one of us, faculty, staff, and students.

Searching for depth can start in concrete ways. It is not only an ideal or a dream.

In a most simple way, I would like to present five commandments:

1. Let us read more. For in reading, reading broadly, carefully and thoughtfully we help our limited and imprisoned imagination to take wings of freedom and truth.
2. Let us inquire more. For in asking questions and getting interested in details that we meet particularities and generalities, thus enlivening our mind.
3. Let us write more. For in writing we test our knowledge, its clarity, its language, and its truth.
4. Let us listen more. For in listening we get into the world of relationships, responsibility and common sense.
5. Let us believe more. For in faith we leave the bankruptcy of human vanity and enter the depth of depths, the holy of holies.

Yes, these, I believe, can change student performance, human meaninglessness, and teaching effectiveness into a discovery of new levels of depth in learning, a clear desire of the founders of Haigazian University.

Today, and as a symbolic celebration of the heritage of the founding purposes of Haigazian University, we are going to highlight one area of service in which our graduates have excelled in depth, and that is leadership in educational institutions. Thus, a little later we will recognize the gifts and dedication of twelve of our alumni: one who graduated as early as 1966, and another as late as 2003, some with their BA others their MA at Haigazian University. Some are presiding over an elementary school, others on technical colleges, another on a theological seminary. By recognizing them, we renew the commitment of HU to offering to society, its emphasis on dedication and service, which we hope to implant as part of our Haigazian tradition. Just to note here that there are still a number of our graduates who are principals of school and leaders in education in Cyprus and Kuwait, Canada and the USA whose service is equally appreciated but they cannot be with us today.

Finally, may we enjoy a year of deeper success than we had planned, and may God empower you dear students.

Rev. Paul Haidostian, Ph.D.
President