

Founders' Day
Haigazian University
Monday, October 16, 2006

President's Message

Other than the end-of the year graduation events, the Founders' Day celebration is the most significant single event during the whole academic year.

First, it tells us all why we are here.

Receiving solid university education is the most effective way of handling modern life with confidence and perspective.

The intention of the founders was to educate all who enter the gates of Haigazian with the keys to becoming effective people, in a sense, leaders of and contributors to the local and global societies. They meant to help the youth excel in developing the various aspects of their identity, so that they may enjoy fulfilling lives. In other words, what the founders meant was to help the young people pursue more than a degree. My dear friends, most people of your age will get some university degree. A degree is not what makes you competitive or attractive. It is only a prerequisite. A degree alone neither guarantees a job nor makes you successful. How you understand yourself, how you relate to others, with what perspective you interpret issues, etc.; these are some examples of the "more". What people look for is what more you have developed, what more than a degree and what more than formal education. When the founders said they wanted many graduates to become leaders in their respective societies, churches, school and companies, they meant to prepare people who are ready to develop a vision for others as well as for themselves.

Second, it reminds us of who made it possible for our university to exist.

Haigazian University exists today as you heard a while ago because more than fifty years ago people in Lebanon and in the USA partnered, sacrificed, planned and paid to establish this institution.

Do we all need to be grateful to the founders? Well, the names mentioned in the slide presentation have mostly passed away. So, I am not going to ask you to send them thank you cards. But developing a sense of interest in the past is the key to being grateful. I will encourage anyone interested to write one of your research

papers on the person in whose memory Haigazian was founded: Armenag Haigazian, or one of the founders themselves.

Third, it allows us to move forward.

There is a way forward for each one of you, and this University aims at helping you grow in every good sense possible.

Moving forward, among other things means finding a balance. And intellectually, ideologically, politically, socially and spiritually balanced young people are harder to find than unbalanced ones.

It is true that in every young man or woman there is a rebel or radical.

There is also a conformist, a "yes" person in each of us.

Now, education should help us find a balance, or become balanced individuals.

It is true that there is an egocentric part in each of us, i.e. my group, my interest, my self.

There is an exocentric in each as well, i.e. helping the other, reaching out to the other.

Now, education should help us find a balance.

In order to get a well-rounded education, or a balanced education, we need to accumulate, process, and share as much as possible.

One does not need to be a prophet to know that the future of Lebanon and of the whole world will be threatened by imbalance, unbalanced perspectives, unbalanced power struggles, unbalanced views of the other, unbalanced representations of religion, add to that an increase in problems of emotional, physical, and ecological imbalance.

The person of virtue, therefore, is the one who enjoys the passion of a rebel, the tranquility of the conformist, but most of all has enough knowledge, experience, community belonging, spiritual depth, wisdom and global perspective to balance it all.

Imbalance needs no effort. Balance needs all the power that you can use. Balanced people are in high demand in all leadership and servanthood positions.

Our time at Haigazian University should be geared to gradually finding the right balance for each one of us. The message is not only to students but also to staff and faculty and the president. Can we give to the others, especially our students enough perspective, information, method, fieldwork, friendship, counsel, and guidelines to help them find the right balance? And of course, it depends on how much each student is ready to absorb and process to reach that balance.

May God be with us all, and may we all work for the good of our neighbors.

I wish you a fruitful year.

Thank you.

Paul Haidostian

President