

*Founders' Day
Haigazian University
Monday, October 15, 2007
Beirut, Lebanon*

PRESIDENT'S WORD

*Dear Colleagues, students, and honored guests,
Director General of the ministry of Environment,
Presidents of the Lebanese Environment Forum and UNAEP*

Celebrating the Founders' day is a celebration of the future. True, we pay tribute to those who founded Haigazian University years ago, but more importantly we celebrate the promise of a future in which successive graduates could become successful leaders in their societies, companies, institutions and families.

The children of the main founders of Haigazian are still alive and live in the USA, and they all remember very fondly how their parents wanted the graduates of the college they started then to become servant leaders in Lebanon and the neighboring countries. As strange as it may sound to many of us today, real leadership could still mean servanthood.

The major thought I would like to propose today is whether we would like to prepare ourselves simply for tomorrow, the immediate tomorrow, the uncertain and questionable tomorrow, or whether we would like to prepare ourselves and our young generation for the day that follows tomorrow.

If tomorrow in Lebanon worries us, because it implies continued tensions in sectarian politics, or elections of various sorts, or political, economic risks and security fears, then I would like to remind us that beyond that tomorrow, we are also called to prepare for the day after tomorrow. It is sad how we live in anxiety about tomorrow and how we present tomorrow as the most critical day in our history. Well, true, let us not minimize the importance of the issues of our days, but I do remember since my childhood that at every political juncture I have heard that the future of Lebanon is at stake and that now is the time to decide whether there will be a Lebanon tomorrow or not. That is why I want to talk about politics after tomorrow.

Let Lebanese politics at Haigazian University mean, among other things:

- 1- the welfare and dignity of the individual **human being** in Lebanon,
- 2- the continued strength of the **cultural heritage** of Lebanon,
- 3- the leading and serving role of the private and non-private **institutions** of Lebanese society,
- 4- the continued **dialogical identity** of Lebanon as a nation.
- 5- the preservation and freshness of the **natural resources** of Lebanon.

While the country immerses itself in divisions and uncritical allegiance to one group or another, let me remind you of what is being lost and the price that is being continually paid: instead of gradually becoming law-abiding citizens, we are re-learning to disobey the laws that are there to serve us; instead of cleaning and beautifying our country we are neglecting Lebanon as a natural source of beauty.

Political divisions often relativise the importance of the land and the green and the sea and the soil and the sky and of course the quality of life in general. The wars in and on Lebanon have destroyed much of its architectural beauty, much more of its natural beauty, and some of the kindness of the people. However, education is an act of hope, and educational institutions have the task of focusing on the quality of persons, persons who also know how to care for quality of the mind and the body and the soul, and therefore the quality of their natural and social environment.

The day after tomorrow. It is the day when we will realize that much has changed in the political calculations, allegiances and topics around us. But if in the meantime we fail to care for our natural resources, the natural house in which we live, we will realize that political agreements will not be able to return to us the trees that were cut, the beaches that were polluted, the mountains that were carved, the springs that lost their routes, and the wells that we abused, and of course, important in our natural habitat, the potential of human beings that we wasted. In a region in which we often complain about the lack of care for the quality of human life, should we expect care for the non-human life around us, people have often asked? I would say, probably one who does not know how to care for life in general, including natural life, will also not care about human life.

On the day after tomorrow, we will see that all politics should have included intensive care for our natural habitat. And for that day after tomorrow, Haigazian University wants to educate a mature and refined generation that does not limit itself to politics in the narrow sense. We are called to be responsible stewards and servants of our gifts, the God-given gift of nature in Lebanon.

How are we going to reach the day after tomorrow? We will learn today that the problems of tomorrow can only be solved if we prepare for the day that takes us beyond tomorrow. And I say that with a sense of hope. Lebanon is blessed with numerous institutions, partners and supporters who have their caring eye on that day after tomorrow. Therefore, I want to highlight today the beneficial work done by dozens of organizations in Lebanon who have made it their goal to create awareness of our larger environmental problems and have taken upon themselves the role of the protectors of the future of Lebanon as a natural gift.

On the Founders' Day of Haigazian University, and as we remember those founders who wanted us to use the potential given to us by God, hoping that we would all reach positions of servanthood, I would like to highlight the leading role of

1. The Lebanese Environment Forum, represented by its president Mr. Rifaat Saba.

2. The UNADEP, Union of the Northern Association for Development, Environment and Patrimony, represented by its president Mr. Mazen Abboud,

...and I would like to present them with a special plaque of recognition.

Thank you.

*Rev. Paul Haidostian, Ph.D.
President*