

FOUNDERS' DAY 2016
HAIGAZIAN UNIVERSITY, Beirut
Monday, October 17, 2016

President's Word

Like today, October 17, 1955 was also a Monday and ten rooms on Mexique Street were turned into a college to prepare teachers. Forty-three students, Armenians and Arabs registered from Lebanon and the neighboring countries to attend this new college called HAIGAZIAN.

Today, as we remember the founding of Haigazian University with gratitude to God, let me summarize our institutional history with three pointed lessons:

1. Good vision covers the limitation of distances. The regional Armenian Evangelical Church (Beirut) and the Armenian Missionary Association of America (NY) partnered in a new project. Stephen Philibosian (Philadelphia), and Stephen Mehagian (Phoenix) captured the vision and selflessly moved forward with the plan. Their memory of Hadjin after the Adana massacres of 1909 was still vivid. They would have loved to rebuild their hometown of the past, but now there was the Cilicia-USA-Lebanon triangle that accomplished part of their dream that also met the right needs of the people. As a fruit of this. Haigazian was born. Basically, the lesson here and today is for our vision to not be limited by the boundaries of geography, politics, or self-protection. Your vision is always yours, do not be afraid to share it, but when the vision is directed towards the others, it gains value and new momentum.
2. Loss and disaster can develop into creative service. Armenian history, with its heavy baggage, is well recognized in this community. Lebanese history, Palestinian history, Syrian and Iraqi current developments are also well known and strongly felt with their tragic developments. The Haigazian U. experience is a living and long-standing proof that hope is not in the waiting for something to be resolved, quieted down, changed, or for history to be erased. Hope is in the immersing of oneself in relevant and creative service to others in spite of everything.

3. Education is always a winner, that is, education that qualitatively sheds light on the world, the world of the past, of the present, and enlightens the prospects of the future. Education is not only schooling, but the school is, for our times, the most systematic institution for education. The support of schools, of teachers, of principals and directors continues to be critical in the mission of HU. Education is and educators are our answer at all times. So, naturally today, just as we did some years ago, we are honoring a group of our alumni who are leading schools in Lebanon as dedicated principals.

As we remember our founders this day, we also celebrate the vibrancy of our student body, our faculty, our staff and our alumni (four thousand alumni all across the globe), reminding us all that the lessons of Founders' Day are even more urgent for our current times than ever, and the mission of our university, with its unique character and family atmosphere in an alienated world, is needed in an acute way.

Therefore, I call upon all of us to be messengers of hope and to renew the commitment to our values of Truth, Freedom, and Service.

I am also pleased that our guest speaker today, is a partner in the same mission.

Dr. George Sabra is the 9th president of the Near East School of Theology since 2012, a sister institution from the first years of Haigazian. Having graduated from the AUB, Princeton Seminary, the U of Toronto and U of Tuebingen, he has devoted his academic career to Systematic Theology, and leadership in the Middle Eastern theological field.

I welcome him, again, to Haigazian University.

Paul Haidostian
President