

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES

November 3, 2015

To the American Bahá'í community
for the Feast of Qudrat

Dearly loved Friends,

As across the country we gather for Feast on this first evening of the Bahá'í month of Qudrat, our thoughts turn to Shoghi Effendi, the beloved Guardian of our Faith, who passed from this life while in London, sometime in the early hours of November 4, 1957.

Some six decades later, we still stand too close to his 36 years as world head of the Faith to appreciate fully—and to measure the lasting impact of—his formidable accomplishments. Consider, for one, his beautification of the Sacred Shrines of our Faith. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had labored for years to make possible the construction of the simple stone building in which the Blessed Báb's remains—secretly transported from place to place for some 60 years—were finally, with great dignity and reverence, laid to rest. While a great accomplishment, the structure itself was too humble to befittingly enshrine the Martyr-Herald of the Promised One of All Ages. It was Shoghi Effendi who undertook the next stage of the Shrine's development—the erection of a magnificent white Carrara marble superstructure crowned with a golden dome.

When Shoghi Effendi took the helm of the Faith's affairs in the closing weeks of 1921, Mt. Carmel was a rocky and barren expanse, largely devoid of vegetation. The creation of the splendid present-day gardens surrounding the Shrine of the Báb was a project to which the beloved Guardian would devote a significant portion of his precious time for the rest of his earthly life. As the Bahá'í land holdings on Mt. Carmel were scant, the first task was to secure additional properties as they became available. As Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khánum tells it, Shoghi Effendi's work to accomplish "the gradual purchase . . . of a great protective belt of land surrounding the Shrine and reaching from the top to the bottom of Mt. Carmel" was little short of miraculous. She continues:

For thirty-six years Shoghi Effendi devoted himself to the development of this Sacred Spot in the midst of God's Holy Mountain; so impressive, so unique and of such vast proportions was his work there that it seems to me some of his very essence must be incorporated in its stones and soil.

Throughout these years of effort to further a practical project with a sacred purpose, the beloved Guardian was aided by supreme confidence that the necessary funds would be at his disposal whenever needed. No one better understood the principle that, as he put it, "the progress and extension of spiritual activities is dependent and conditioned upon material means."

Though the projects and activities in which we, today's American Bahá'ís, are engaged are of a different scale and scope, they are no less sacred in their aim and purpose. Whether employed in the direct support of the exciting community-building work taking place in numerous clusters across the country; in our labors to secure for our valiant, sorely tried Iranian sisters and brothers in Faith their God-given human rights; or in the maintenance of our property holdings—from our majestic and singularly blessed Bahá'í House of Worship, to the permanent Bahá'í schools and institutes, to the historic homes where the Master spent time during his American sojourn—the material resources you supply through your regular and sacrificial contributions to our National Fund are vital to the progress and extension of our activities, all of them deeply and thoroughly imbued with spiritual significance.

We are filled with wonder, admiration, and pride whenever we recall the ingenuity and enterprise, the spirit of sacrifice and unity of purpose our remarkable community has often shown in the closing months of the fiscal year, rescuing our National Fund from potential shortfalls and rallying to meet—even exceed—our annual contributions goal. Yet heartening as these successes have been, they are, when seen from another perspective, indicative of a need for greater maturity in the way we approach our financial responsibilities. In carrying out the wide range of activities we have already touched on, the National Spiritual Assembly must have ready access to a steady and reliable stream of funds—else we will find ourselves neither able to meet important existing commitments nor to seize on exciting new opportunities. The beloved Guardian remarked on this very subject in a letter written to this Assembly on his behalf in 1935:

The Guardian would advise your Assembly to continue impressing upon the believers the necessity of their contributing regularly to the [N]ational [F]und, irrespective of whether there is an emergency to be met or not. Nothing short of a continuous flow of contributions to that [F]und can, indeed, ensure the financial stability upon which so much of the progress of the institutions of the Faith must now inevitably depend.

At present, with half the current fiscal year already behind us, and with contributions standing at \$12.4 million, we have achieved only about 36 percent of our \$34 million Fund goal. This means that to achieve the goal by the end of the current fiscal year, we will need contributions of some \$4 million every month between now and Ridván. This is a formidable challenge, to be sure, yet experience has shown us all we can do it!

Friends, let this be the year that we break with old habits and answer the beloved Guardian's summons; as we call to mind his life of living sacrifice to this sacred and unifying Cause, let this be the evening that we begin a new pattern of giving to our National Fund. Let us not wait till the final weeks of the year to remember, as he put it, "the necessity of maintaining the flow of [our] contributions," let us remind ourselves that our contributions constitute "a practical and effective way whereby every believer can test the measure and character of his faith, and prove in deeds the intensity of his devotion and attachment to the Cause."

Our prayers that your noble and unselfish efforts in the pathway of service will be confirmed, blessed, and crowned with great success are with you at all times.

With our deepest love,

NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY OF
THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF THE UNITED STATES



Juana C. Conrad
Treasurer