

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

February 6, 2016

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

Dearly loved Friends,

Recent and richly rewarding consultations we enjoyed over the course of a January weekend with three members of the Continental Board of Counselors focused on the Five Year Plan to be launched at Ridván, the features and challenges of which were described by the Universal House of Justice in its messages of December 29 and January 2. Both messages were shared with the community immediately on their receipt and we note with pleasure the swiftness with which some have embarked on the careful study of them we commended to you.

Together with an abundance of insights gained from the historic conference in the Holy Land they had just attended, the Counselors brought to our consultations the spirit of that gathering, held in the precincts of the Shrines of the Twin Manifestations of God, Who, seated upon Their thrones in the unseen Kingdom, guide and protect the fortunes of the Cause of God. Experiencing that spiritual energy filled our hearts with joy and gratitude and inspired us with confidence in the capacity of our storied community to meet the challenges of the years ahead.

And what challenges they are! The House of Justice characterized them in its December 29 letter in striking terms:

In this coming Plan, which will conclude at the threshold of the second century of the Formative Age of the Faith, we will call the believers everywhere to the immense exertion necessary to bring to fruition the seeds that have been so lovingly and assiduously sown and watered in the five Plans that preceded it.

The Supreme Body further remarked:

The coming global endeavour to which the friends will be summoned calls for the application of proven strategies, systematic action, informed analysis, and keen insight. Yet above all, it is a spiritual enterprise, and its true character should never be obscured. The urgency to act is impelled by the world's desperate condition. All that the followers of Bahá'u'lláh have learned in the last twenty years must culminate in the accomplishments of the next five.

These statements call to mind the diligent and patient labors of Shoghi Effendi, the beloved Guardian of our Faith, during the first three decades of his ministry, to increase the capacities and foster the spiritual growth of the worldwide Bahá'í community and to perfect its administrative structure—until the time came, in 1953, to launch the first global Plan. That great Ten Year World Crusade, as he himself indicated at its outset and which subsequent events proved, can be viewed as the fruition of the years of sacrificial work that had gone before it, opening the way for a new stage in the further penetration of the light of God's Cause, "in the course of numerous crusades and of successive epochs of both the Formative and Golden Ages of the Faith, into all the remaining territories of the globe through the erection of the entire machinery of Bahá'u'lláh's Administrative Order in all territories, both East and

West, the stage at which the light of God's triumphant Faith shining in all its power and glory will have suffused and enveloped the entire planet."

All told, these reflections have enabled us to see the immense possibilities with which the forthcoming Plan is pregnant. Bringing these to vibrant life will, however, require of every believer a renewed commitment and consecration to service, while calling on the community as a whole to demonstrate an unprecedented unity of purpose. The House of Justice reminded us that the coming five years will open with the centenary of the revelation by 'Abdu'l-Bahá of the Tablets of the Divine Plan, will coincide with the bicentenaries of the Births of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, and will conclude with the centenary of the unveiling of the Master's Will and Testament—the document the beloved Guardian posited as the "Charter of Bahá'u'lláh's New World Order." Such significant anniversaries will doubtless serve as a source of added inspiration as we rise to the formidable tasks that have been laid before us.

We assure you, each one, of our ardent prayers that your efforts to add your distinct contributions to this new and exciting chapter in His Plan for the redemption of the world will be confirmed and blessed by the King of Glory.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

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Kenneth E. Bowers
Secretary