

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

14 October 2016

To the Friends Gathered in Santiago,
Chile, for the Dedication of the
Mother Temple of South America

Dearly loved Friends,

We greet you with immense joy on this singular occasion, a moment of high achievement for the Bahá'í world after much earnest striving: The process of raising up Bahá'í Houses of Worship, an endeavour whose origins can be traced back to the days of the Blessed Beauty Himself, has reached the point where today a Mother Temple stands upon the soil of every continent. Three such Temples now lie on a pan-American axis, to whose southern pole you have all been drawn. As anticipated by the Guardian, it is the Chilean capital city that has become the site of the first *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár* of South America. Blending grace and grandeur in equal measure, this Dawning-Point of God's Remembrance now summons all comers to worship the One Who is their Creator, their sovereign Lord, the Giver of Light to the world.

The weighty statements in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* addressed to the presidents of the republics of the Americas, adding to the mandate given by the Báb to all the “peoples of the West” to aid His Cause, confer upon those countries, north and south, honour and obligations ineffaceable. Those pregnant words portended the intimate association of South America with the Faith. We recall with deep admiration the heroic and sacrificial deeds of those believers who first introduced to this continent the name of Bahá'u'lláh. With their resolve kindled by the rallying call of the Master in His Tablets delineating the Divine Plan, and urged on by Shoghi Effendi in the successive directions he gave for the Plan's prosecution, pioneers travelled to the nations of Latin America and began nurturing communities that could maintain Local and, eventually, National Spiritual Assemblies—communities that came to be designated by the Guardian as “associates of the chief executors of the Plan bequeathed by ‘Abdu'l-Bahá’”. The success of large-scale teaching endeavours revealed the purity and open-mindedness of the continent's inhabitants in all their diversity, and their evident receptivity to the divine impulse. One of the most striking hallmarks of that period was the enthusiasm with which indigenous people embraced the vision of Bahá'u'lláh and His Faith, recognizing the power of His Word to liberate the soul and transform society. With such advances made, the friends took up the challenge of learning how to sustain a process of rapid expansion and consolidation. Insights that emerged from the experience accrued in this region have benefited the entire Bahá'í world, and the present-day efforts of the South American believers to spread the Faith and build communities upon spiritual foundations are a continuing source of inspiration. How fitting, then, that at a time when the peoples and nations of the Western Hemisphere have never been more in need of the illumination brought by the teachings of God's universal Messenger, a powerful spiritual beacon is now in full blaze at the foot of the Andes.

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is “one of the most vital institutions in the world”. A Temple and its associated dependencies embody two essential and inseparable aspects of Bahá'í life: worship and service. As a potent symbol and an integral element of the divine civilization towards which Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation ushers all peoples, the House of Worship becomes the focal point of the community from which it emerges. “The holy fragrances of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár”, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá explains, “vivify the souls of the righteous, and its vitalizing breezes confer life upon the pure in heart.” Indeed, its influence is such as to galvanize an entire people to reach for a more profound sense of unified purpose. The gaze of the Bahá'í world is at this hour fixed upon its newly dedicated Temple, and we are certain that this longed-for victory will bring jubilation to the friends everywhere. Yet they will surely not be content to simply rejoice amongst themselves. Inspired by all that this sublime edifice stands for, let them invite others to discover the abiding joy that comes from the praise of God and from service to humankind.

Bowing our heads at the Threshold of the Ancient Beauty, we give thanks that He has enabled His devoted followers to construct so striking a Temple fashioned of glass, stone, and light, nurturing an attraction to the sacred. The gratitude we feel increases our longing for that glorious day when the blessing of a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár will be conferred upon every city and village, and we look first with eagerness to those countries where national and local Houses of Worship are beginning to emerge. May the resplendent sight of what the community of the Greatest Name has now accomplished in Santiago spur the faithful everywhere to intensify their service, however humble, rendered for the betterment of the world, offered to the Glory of God.

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