

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

February 28, 2017

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

Dearly loved Friends,

At sunrise tomorrow, we begin our annual Bahá'í month of fasting, that special season of self-restraint that includes our abstaining from food and drink during the hours of daylight. Perhaps more forcefully than any other time of the year, these unique 19 days remind us of the mystery of sacrifice.

In a talk given in His last days in America, in December 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke at length on the subject of sacrifice, affirming that the divine summons to sacrifice given voice by all the Manifestations of God calls us to "*sever [ourselves] from the influences of the world of matter*" and abandon an earthly realm of "*evil and darkness,*" of "*ambition and avarice,*" of "*self-worship [and] egotism*" and seek instead the "*heavenly qualities*" and "*divine attributes*" of the eternal Kingdom of God. Surely the Fast we will strive to keep in the ensuing days is a measure of the degree of this severance, for it is, so the Master explains in another place, "*the withholding of oneself from all appetites of the self, taking on the characteristics of the spirit, being carried away by the breathings of heaven and catching fire from the love of God.*"

As our discipline in observing the Fast is a measure of our severance from the world of matter and our devotion to the things of the spirit, surely another measure can be seen in the character of our contributions to the Funds of the Faith—of our willingness to give freely and generously from the material resources at our disposal to further the progress of God's Cause. As the Universal House of Justice has advised us:

Giving to the Fund, therefore, is a spiritual privilege . . . of which no believer should deny himself. It is both a responsibility and a source of bounty. . . . The importance of contributing resides in the degree of sacrifice of the giver, the spirit of devotion with which the contribution is made and the unity of the friends in this service; these attract the confirmations of God and enhance the dignity and self-respect of the individuals and the community.

When we consider the range and number of activities and tasks our National Fund supports—from the work of our 12 Regional Bahá'í Councils and the community-building efforts taking place in scores of clusters, to the learning being shared in our permanent and seasonal Bahá'í schools, to the efforts of our Publishing Trust to make the essential texts of our Faith available at a reasonable price—we can see just how vital the precious dollars contributed by the friends are to the growth and development of our national community.

Friends, at this writing, contributions to the National Bahá'í Fund stand at \$28.9 million. While our pattern of giving this year has shown marked improvement, with just eight weeks now separating us from Ridván and the close of the fiscal year, \$6 million are needed to fulfill our annual Fund goal of \$35 million—an amount requiring nearly a million dollars a week.

Formidable as this gap seems, experience has shown we can close it! Time and again, this storied community has not only shown itself able in such cases to employ to amazing effect its remarkable ingenuity, resourcefulness, and spirit of enterprise, but, above all, it has demonstrated its readiness to make the sacrifices necessary to surmount every hurdle and attain final and complete victory.

Message for the Feast of 'Alá'

February 28, 2017

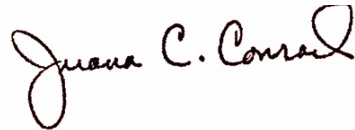
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In these last weeks of our Bahá'í administrative year, let us—with a marvelous and never-before-seen outpouring of contributions—vindicate our designation by the beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, as the “spiritual descendants of the dawn-breakers of an heroic Age,” who must “usher in, not by [our] death, but through living sacrifice that promised World Order, the shell ordained to enshrine that priceless jewel, the world civilization, of which the Faith itself is the sole begetter.”

Our warm admiration for you, our steadfast faith in you, and our constant prayers for you surround you at all times.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juana C. Conrad". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'J'.

Juana C. Conrad
Treasurer