

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

October 14, 2017

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

Dearly loved Friends,

With the bicentenary of Bahá'u'lláh's birth just days away, we take the opportunity of your gatherings for this Feast to recall the hopes and expectations the Universal House of Justice has expressed for the joyous celebrations about to commence. In its letter to the Bahá'ís of the world on May 18, 2016, the Supreme Body, referring to commemorations of both of the Twin Holy Birthdays, wrote:

At the heart of these festivities must be a concerted effort to convey a sense of what it means for humanity that these two Luminaries rose successively above the horizon of the world. Of course, this will take different forms in different contexts, extending to a myriad artistic and cultural expressions, including songs, audio-visual presentations, publications and books. Such initiatives, coupled with widespread celebrations that are both uplifting and reverent, are also sure to spark the curiosity and wonder of many who may as yet be unfamiliar with the names of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. However, the real transformative power of the Faith is likely to be perceived more readily still if people experience how worship and meaningful service are being woven into the fabric of the lives of Bahá'ís everywhere. Indeed, from the community-building activities of the Five Year Plan emerges a pattern of collective life within which anyone can discern the vivifying influence of the divine teachings brought by God's Manifestations. Each bicentenary will doubtless kindle a spirit of faithful endeavour that will permeate all the noble undertakings of the friends. . . .

The steps taken during these months, and the achievements that come as a result, will constitute an offering of ardent love, yielded collectively to Him Who is the Unifier of the world on the bicentenary of His Birth. The spiritual forces that are sure to be released on that auspicious occasion will do much to spur the friends into action as they commence the eight cycles that lie between the two bicentenaries, during which the greatest share of the effort needed to fulfill the goal of the Plan will be required.

We eagerly await news of the ways in which your activities both leading up to and including the literally thousands of upcoming celebrations—as well as stories of the relationships you have either begun or deepened with friends and contacts—will have demonstrated wholehearted efforts to fulfill the express desires of the House of Justice.

To this end, we will, immediately following the bicentenary weekend, be sending out a survey requesting Local Spiritual Assemblies to report on the events they sponsored—and individuals to describe the activities they initiated—in connection with this sacred and historic occasion. Highlights of the survey will be published as soon as possible thereafter. Please be sure to respond and to encourage others to do so as well.

With hearts filled with loving gratitude, happily anticipating our learning about the fruits of your devoted efforts, we close with these words from the Lawh-i-Mawlúd (Tablet of the Birth) in which Bahá'u'lláh lauds the significance of His own appearance in the world:

*O Concourse of the seen and the unseen! Rejoice with exceeding gladness in your hearts and souls, for the night hath come for the harvesting of the ages and the gathering up of past cycles, the night wherein all days and nights were called into being and the time preordained for this Revelation was fulfilled at the behest of Him Who is the Lord of might and power. All joy to the Concourse on high at the appearance of so glorious, so wondrous a Spirit!*

Our warmest affection, our great pride in your achievements, and our ardent prayers for your happiness and well-being accompany you in all you do.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

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Kenneth E. Bowers  
Secretary