

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1 June 2018

Transmitted by email

To all National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

The tremendous stimulus given to the work of the Five Year Plan by the celebration of the bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh is apparent in all parts of the world. Thoughts are naturally turning to the two hundredth anniversary of the Birth of the Báb and what must be accomplished before this second bicentenary, so that “every seed so lovingly sown at the first” may be “nurtured patiently towards fruition”. The Universal House of Justice has requested that we convey to you a number of points to assist your deliberations on this theme. You are welcome to share the contents of this letter with the friends in your communities in any manner you deem appropriate.

The broad framework for understanding the Bahá'í world's approach to both bicentenaries has already been set out in the letter to you dated 18 May 2016, written on behalf of the House of Justice. This letter indicated, in particular, that the locus of activity was to be at the local level. It also described the eight cycles between the two anniversaries as the period during which the greatest share of the effort needed to fulfil the objectives of the Five Year Plan would be required. This, therefore, must be the main focus of the believers in their clusters. It is a season of intensive activity that is well under way, and less than a year and a half remains. Included in this precious period are the Twin Holy Days this year, due to be observed in only a few months' time. On these occasions, the friends will have a valuable opportunity to draw on the rich experience they gained last year by bringing people together in local celebrations that uplift hearts and kindle spirits.

Preparations for the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb should be undertaken with a recognition that the festivities marking this anniversary have a special context. They will occur just two years after the bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh, and the Báb was of course the Herald of Bahá'u'lláh. Before and after the first bicentenary, the believers engaged family, friends, and acquaintances of all kinds in conversations about the life and teachings of the Blessed Beauty, and the conversations which occur in connection with the upcoming anniversary will in many ways be an extension of these, centring on both of the Faith's Twin Founders. For the greatness of this Day, this “matchless Day” extolled by Bahá'u'lláh, is evident from the fact that its advent was announced by two divine Manifestations, Whose Birthdays are “accounted as one in the sight of God”. In Himself, and in the break from the prevailing order which His Revelation brought about, the sacred figure of the Báb was an answer to the prayers and entreaties of the generations that awaited the One foretold by all the Holy Scriptures. With His coming, the eternal Faith of God was renewed and revitalized with extraordinary swiftness. Yet, in the very title He chose for Himself, He signalled that He was the portal to a superior Revelation of which, in the words of Shoghi Effendi, “He considered Himself to be the humble Precursor.” The endeavours of the Bahá'ís throughout the world to

labour for the promotion of the Cause call to mind the exhortation of the Báb explicitly set down in the Bayan: “Well is it with him who fixeth his gaze upon the Order of Bahá’u’lláh, and rendereth thanks unto his Lord.”

As plans for the next bicentenary take shape, there will doubtless begin to emerge many examples of artistic expression arising from a profound reflection on the appearance above the horizon of the world, in quick succession, of two Manifestations of God, and the implications for the life of humanity. You will find it helpful to know that the House of Justice intends once again to commission both a film and a dedicated website for the occasion. It also anticipates preparing a special letter to mark the two-hundred-year anniversary. More details about these will become available in due course.

A notable feature of the last bicentenary was the number of tributes to Bahá’u’lláh and messages of congratulation issued by dignitaries and prominent members of society, often in response to invitations they had received to offer thoughtful sentiments. However, the character of this occasion does not lend itself to attempts to seek public statements of this kind. Nevertheless, efforts to help such persons become more familiar with the teachings and fundamentals of the Faith, as well as the endeavours of the community, would, of course, continue in a natural manner.

In this year’s Riḍván message, the House of Justice referred to the heroism of the Báb and His followers, the stirring accounts of whose lives are sure to be revisited and retold in the coming months. In keeping with the overall approach to this bicentenary, it will be important to reflect on the purpose of calling to mind these remarkable narratives, which possess a merit far beyond an exploration of history. They enable the friends, who are occupied with responding to the needs of the Cause in this day, to draw inspiration and courage from the sacrifices of the dawn-breakers. They assist the company of believers to realize that, by consecrating themselves to the acts of service required in this age, they are emulating the noble qualities of their spiritual forebears.

The heights to which the Bahá’í community so recently soared, in its longing to befittingly honour “a Being peerless in creation”, are still vivid in the memory. The possibilities created by the celebration of this second bicentenary, following so closely upon the first and building upon what was learned then, appear boundless. Be assured of the prayers of the House of Justice in the Holy Shrines for all the friends of God, supplicating that heavenly bestowals may surround them at every stage of their deliberations and in every action they take for His sake.

With loving Bahá’í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat

cc: International Teaching Centre
Boards of Counsellors
Counsellors