

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

January 18, 2020

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

Beloved Friends and Co-workers,

In November 2021, 22 short months from now, the Bahá'í world will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá from this earthly life, celebrating with it the close of a richly historic first century of the Faith's Formative Age. With pride and deepest gratitude, we will cast our minds back across those long years on all that we, the many successive generations of the Master's spiritual children, have achieved. We will marvel at the wondrous results of the constant stream of guidance and encouragement we received during those same years from Shoghi Effendi, the beloved Guardian of the Faith, and are receiving now from the Universal House of Justice. We will testify to the mounting evidence of the undiminished power of the Bahá'í Covenant to revolutionize the fortunes of humanity—a power that gains strength with every passing year.

We Bahá'ís of North America—a community raised up by the Master's own hand, the recipients of His infinite love, and the beneficiaries of His countless blessings—have a special responsibility to work toward the realization of His many promises of its destiny. Consider, for one, the following:

Exert yourselves; your mission is unspeakably glorious. Should success crown your enterprise, America will assuredly evolve into a center from which waves of spiritual power will emanate, and the throne of the Kingdom of God will, in the plentitude of its majesty and glory, be firmly established.

As we approach the opening of the second century of the Faith's Formative Age, we call upon the friends everywhere to make a new and greater effort to accelerate the momentum built during the course of this Five Year Plan, especially during and in the afterglow of last fall's joyous observances of the bicentenary of the Blessed Báb's Birth. Among the many significant achievements of this period has been a notable increase in our capacity to establish relationships with friends from the larger community and to invite them to serve shoulder to shoulder with us in building a new kind of community anchored in spiritual principles. But much more needs to be done, as the following statement from the Supreme Body tells us:

We urge you to see in each person who responded to your invitation a potential protagonist in the community-building process. Consider how conditions may be created that would enable many to walk this path together. Connected to the transformative power of the Revelation, every soul can draw closer to Bahá'u'lláh, grow in capacity, find joy in service, and learn to assist others.

As we all have repeatedly been shown, the institute process is the very heart of our efforts. It is a process with surpassing power to effect individual transformation:

Central to the pattern of action evolving in a cluster is the individual and collective transformation effected through the agency of the Word of God. From the beginning of the sequence of courses, a participant encounters Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation in considering such weighty themes as worship, service to humanity, the life of the soul, and the education of children and youth. As a person

cultivates the habit of study and deep reflection upon the Creative Word, this process of transformation reveals itself in an ability to express one's understanding of profound concepts and to explore spiritual reality in conversations of significance.

Equally important, the process recognizes the truth that the growth of any individual is inextricably linked with that of others: we must walk the road of spirituality and service together. The House of Justice encourages us to think of our efforts in every community in terms of an "expanding nucleus" of souls dedicated to translating the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh into vibrant reality:

[T]here must emerge in many hundreds of clusters a growing band of believers who can maintain, with those around them, a sustained focus on nurturing growth and building capacity, and who are distinguished by their ability and their discipline to reflect on action and learn from experience. Raising up and accompanying an expanding nucleus of individuals in each place—not just at the level of the cluster but within neighbourhoods and villages—is at once a formidable challenge and a critical need. But where this is occurring, the results speak for themselves.

In these final five cycles of the Plan, the Bahá'í community of North America has been offered a precious chance to respond to the Supreme Body's summons to "cast away the idle fancies and distractions of a world that has lost its way." Seizing this chance, we can consecrate ourselves "to the priceless opportunities and inescapable obligations of the latest stage of a spiritual enterprise on which the fate of humanity ultimately depends."

What more sincere thanks could we offer our beloved Master than to arise with supreme unity of purpose, with complete devotion to the Divine Plan He entrusted to us, and with unswerving fidelity to the guidance of the Universal House of Justice? What could give the Master greater happiness than to see this blessed community achieve significant advances in clusters across the land, from those just setting out on the continuum of growth to those that have reached its third milestone? What could better vindicate His assurances of divine assistance and promises of the glorious destiny of this nation than our greeting the upcoming centenary of His Ascension bearing the laurels of a resounding victory?

We pray a glorious consummation such as this will be fully realized through your sacrificial efforts. Our love and our fond hopes surround you, each and every one.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

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



Kenneth E. Bowers
Secretary