

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

March 1, 2020

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

Dearly loved Friends,

As with tonight's Feast we enter the Bahá'í month set aside for fasting, it is fitting that we pause to reflect on the meaning of sacrifice, for the two concepts of fasting and sacrifice are, in our Faith, so closely linked as to be interwoven.

The modern English word "sacrifice" evolved from root words that, taken together, literally mean "to make sacred." Fasting, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has explained, is best understood as a symbol of self-restraint and is an act made sacred when it is inspired by the love of God and carried out in willing obedience to His law. Similarly, all our contributions to the Faith—whether they be given in the form of service or in monetary form—are made sacred when they are offered lovingly, unselfishly, and liberally, from the fullness of our hearts. And they most find favor at the Divine Threshold when they represent a measure of self-denial—a giving up of self to God.

Throughout his 36-year ministry as Guardian of our Faith, Shoghi Effendi labored assiduously to make it clear to Bahá'ís that one of the duties and privileges of being a follower of Bahá'u'lláh lies in materially supporting the work of His Faith. He further noted that the amount of sacrifice at the heart of our giving is far more important than the sum involved. "The penny of a poor man," Hand of the Cause of God Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhiyyih Khánum writes, "which may for him and his family represent a real sacrifice, is as precious, as much needed and just as respectable a contribution as the hundreds or thousands of dollars a [more prosperous] Bahá'í may give." Time and again, she adds, the beloved Guardian stressed sacrifice as the single most important element in our giving. As he points out in a letter written on his behalf:

The more one can give, the better it is, especially when such offerings necessitate the sacrifice of other wants and desires on the part of the donor. The harder the sacrifice the more meritorious will it be, of course, in the sight of God. For after all it is not so much the quantity of one's offerings that matters, but rather the measure of deprivation that such offerings entail.

We speak of these things, dear friends, because, at this writing, with less than nine weeks separating us from the close of our administrative year, contributions to our National Bahá'í Fund remain a formidable \$11 million short of our \$40 million goal. If we are to meet our goal and fulfill our many and pressing obligations, sacrificial giving will, from this point forward, be more than ever needed.

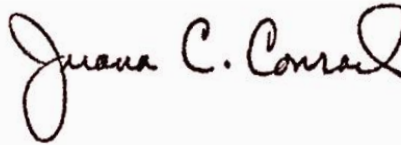
Experience has shown us we can do this. To give but one example, your sacrificial giving has so far supplied the Universal House of Justice with some \$5 million to help finance the construction of a magnificent, long-anticipated Shrine at our World Center dedicated to the Perfect Exemplar of our teachings, the beloved Master, 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Marshalling the considerable strengths of our storied community—so richly endowed with creativity, ingenuity, enterprise, and experience, so fortunate in the material resources at our disposal—there seems little, when united in purpose, we cannot do.

We call upon you, therefore—with full confidence in your many-times demonstrated readiness to respond wholeheartedly and generously to the urgent needs of our Faith—to set your exceptional resourcefulness to work. May we unloose across our land so many individual and collective streams of sacrificial giving that we will soon see no mere river, but a mighty onrushing torrent of contributions flooding our national Treasury, enabling us not only to meet but to exceed our vitally important Fund goal well before year's end!

Be sure our warmest affection, our sincerest admiration, and our ardent prayers for great success will accompany you in all you do to aid in this all-important endeavor.

With our deep and abiding love,

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Juana C. Conrad". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "C".

Juana C. Conrad
Treasurer