

24 June 2019 / 1 Mercy 176

To the Bahá'ís of Canada on the occasion of the Feast of Mercy

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

In its Ridván message this year, the Universal House of Justice commented that the International Teaching Centre, the Counsellors and the Auxiliary Board members “have stopped at nothing” to ensure that lessons learned in one part of the world are quickly disseminated, allowing the friends in other countries to apply the insights to their own realities. In April this year, a priceless gift was given to the Canadian Bahá'í community to directly learn from the Sydney, Australia cluster, through a 10-day visit by a team of friends from the Vancouver and Toronto clusters.

The vision of growth they brought back galvanized the friends present at the National Convention and those watching the Convention via livestreaming and since then, participants in post-Convention gatherings. As the delegates learned how a strong institute process and working with larger numbers has created a vibrant, purposeful, welcoming community life in the Sydney cluster, they began to think about how the lessons learned could apply to our own reality in Canada.

The prospect of working with larger numbers, far from being a mere numerical exercise of multiplying core activities, drew inspiration from the statement in the 26 March 2016 message to the Bahá'ís of the United States and of Canada: “The movement of your clusters to the farthest frontiers of learning will usher in the time anticipated by Shoghi Effendi at the start of your collective exertions, when the communities you build will directly combat and eventually eradicate the forces of corruption, of moral laxity, and of ingrained prejudice eating away at the vitals of society”. This truth brought the friends from every part of the country — from Nunavut to British Columbia to Newfoundland — together in a spirited, united commitment to support two of Canada’s clusters, Vancouver and Toronto, in their aim of achieving 500 core activities by the bicentenary of the Birth of the Báb and 1000 core activities by the end of the Plan. A third cluster, Ottawa, has now joined these two with a goal of over 800 core activities by the end of the Plan.

These numbers take on new meaning as we ponder the daily news, a parade of evidence that the destructive processes are gaining strength in a world crying out for meaning, for hope, for unity and peace. Every devotional gathering established is a “much-needed response to humanity’s growing estrangement from the Source of hope and bounty” that kindles the flame of love in the heart. Every junior youth group is a step in establishing patterns of a coherent life that channels belief into action. Every study circle is a path to penetrating the meaning of His Revelation and bringing it into the visible world through service. Every children’s class mines the potential of these gems of inestimable value. Every meaningful conversation, whether in a home visit or a fireside, is an antidote to despair, leading quickly or gradually to the stirring of spiritual susceptibilities. Rising up out of these processes is a new people with new patterns of individual and collective life. You are bringing this reality into being, through your every prayer, act of service, your every sacrifice.

Around you who are present at this Feast or are reading this message in your homes are tens of thousands who have already responded to the conversations you have initiated in relationships you have nurtured. Between now and the end of the Plan in April 2021, the widening embrace of the community-building work will extend to hundreds of thousands. How can we not recall those passages from the Guardian that speak of a thousandfold increase in the fortunes of the Faith? And are we not then drawn to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s summons: “Thus far ye have been untiring in your labors. Let your exertions henceforth increase a thousandfold. Summon the people in these countries, capitals, islands, assemblies and churches to enter the Abha Kingdom. The scope of your exertions must needs be extended. The wider its range, the more striking will be the evidence of divine assistance.”

Between now and the Twin Holy Days on 29 and 30 October, we urge each of you to re-examine the calls in the National Assembly’s 6 April 2018 letter and think of how your own efforts to build the world anew can achieve new levels of focus and intensity, whatever your circumstances. This state can be likened to a gardener who has lovingly tended a small backyard patch and who wishes to learn to farm: efforts cannot be frantic or haphazard, but they require a commitment to learn, through study, action, reflection and consultation. They need rhythm and consistency and above all, a careful consideration by individuals, communities and institutions of how to spend precious time and resources.

For this day is unlike other days. Nineteen weeks remain until the bicentenary anniversary of the Birth of the Báb, during which your efforts will focus on advancing the Cause He foretold. Eighteen months later, this Plan — the final one in this series of Plans — will conclude, and shortly thereafter the Bahá’í world will commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the inauguration of His Covenant. A unique period in human history will draw to a close, and new horizons will appear. That the flame of love for the Twin Manifestations will have grown to a blaze in each of your hearts, and that the diverse peoples of Canada will have been warmed by its intensity, is our ardent prayer.

With loving Bahá’í greetings,
NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE BAHÁ’ÍS OF CANADA



Karen McKye, Secretary