



**Address by Rev. Fr. Hady Mahfouz, President of the Holy Spirit University of
Kaslik (USEK)**

**Doctorate Honoris Causa for the Chairman and CEO of Bank of Beirut
Mr. Salim Sfeir**

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The heart and the doctorate in Business and Commercial Sciences. The coupling of these two aspects might seem paradoxical at first. A question occurs to the mind immediately: how can a heart that carries passion, love and nostalgia, that sacrifices itself for others, be associated with the world of Business Administration and Commercial Sciences, where the rigidness of reason, the sublimation of the profit and loss equation, and the planning and outshining the other is all-important? So we add to this coupling, on one hand, the University which is conferring this title, the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, child of the Lebanese Maronite Order, and, on the other hand, a great man who deserves this title, the new Doctor, Mr. Salim Sfeir, Chairman and CEO of Bank of Beirut. The result of all of this is the reorientation of the thinking about the relationship between the heart and Business and Commercial Sciences.

The heart is not only the center of emotional feelings, but it is also the center of faith (Psalm 53: 2; 78: 18 - 37; 86: 11), and the center of perception (Proverbs 2:2). It is the center of everything that is not subject to concrete and mathematical logic, which is often considered the only viable option. The heart is the center of the principles and ideals. The heart has its secrets that deepen its elegance and allure. It transcends our perception of the ordinary things and we remain unable to fully understand it. It makes us realize that there is something much higher than the concrete, and by its composition, it does not stay away from reality; it is the

center of the abstract which has a direct impact on the concrete, and can be even seen as the engine of the concrete.

Business and its administration are the concrete perceptions in the daily life of the human being. Each one of us has his/her own business, small or large, which is meant to be well administrated and successful. Thereby, each one of us activates logic in order to reach a better result. Then, the rules of business administration start according to the practices of science, the accounts of profit and loss are set and each one reveals his or her intelligence and prudence to prove to himself/herself or to others, that he/she is competent, a master of business. But administrative sciences ascertain more and more that the biggest administrative decisions must go beyond the analysis of figures and data processing as outlined lately by a number of studies in the Harvard Business Review. So it becomes evident, in a steady and broader way, that the factor of the intangible, faith, intuition, principle, perception, trust or what is hidden in the heart has a direct influence on the success of business administration. Thus, consideration is not enough, and the readiness of mind is necessary according to a life principle followed by the person, to an intuition and a power of decision and according to the state in which a person recognizes that his/her intelligence, intuition and personality are but a sparkle of a big creation that God gives. It is the state where the person recognizes that the Creator is the Father of All and all are brothers and sisters, and that every business is successful if it contributes to the development of the "I" and "We" all together; in other words, both the individual and the human family. There is no success in work if it does not contribute to the development of the human being, every human being, without any discrimination, and the whole human being, in all his/her dimensions, as the Catholic Church teaches us.

Human beings manage the concrete, acknowledging that the intangible is beyond them, in time and dimensions, so they lean on the intangible too and they succeed.

Therefore, it is the fusion of the heart and business administration that embellishes both of them and that gives each of them its full sense. And so, there will be no separation or contradiction between them but an essential integration, giving meaning to existence. It is the positive meaning of business, through which all good managers are satisfied that they rely on their hearts in their administration and through which every person with a heart is pleased that he/she reflects the joy of his/her heart on administration. It is the story of talents that appear in our daily life. It is a feeling that liberates the human being from the split that many impose on the heart and faith, on the one hand, and on business on the other hand. It is the heart that shades business and it is business that allows to the heart to be tangible.

We do see this truth when we meet Mr. Salim Sfeir. In fact, he is a successful administrator, par excellence; his face reflects the smile overflowing from his heart, which reminds us, when we meet him, of what Ben Sirach said in the Old Testament: "the heart changes one's face either for good or for evil"(Ecclesiasticus 13:25)

His facial features are supported by the features of his sayings and his deeds. I will quote some of the words coming from his heart (features of his sayings) in an interview with the magazine Banker Middle East, four months ago, in December 2013: "I constantly look beyond being agile, adaptive and being obliged to understand things in the context of the moment. I am, at heart, a traditional banker and I believe in traditional banking values. Central value number one is trust. Trust is at the top of my agenda. Technology changes. Economies change. Trust must be constant." It is a principle; it is trust and faith. I would like also to mention some of his thoughts when he addressed our students two years ago as the keynote speaker in the commencement ceremony in July 2012: he named positivity as the path towards steadfastness in the nation, and he led students towards this positivity by asking them not to put migration as their aim in their lives. His talks in personal meetings also come from a heart full of faith, trust and strength.

The features of his deeds are the same and did not change: features of the joy of trading with and elevating talents. Indeed, he built a banking world of which he is proud along with every person looking at the deeds of this adventurous and bold man bearing a strong and a good heart. The borders of his bank went beyond the Lebanese borders, expanding to many countries, such as Australia.

He created a business and promoted it. He took care of the human being, especially his partners and employees at the bank. It was notable that he concluded his interview with the above-mentioned magazine talking specifically about his partners and employees, praising their potential, which is an essential element of the bank's success. He took care of the human being by interacting with the society, with students, outstanding students and with universities. He does not seclude himself to his business world, but he asks the hand of his heart to open the gate of his deeds to the human being, every human being. He also helped Caritas Lebanon in its projects, by being a helping hand to the life-wounded and to the marginalized. This demonstrates he has a great faith with a good heart, he listens to the social teaching of the Church which is embodied in the last Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis the 'Evangelii Gaudium', where the Holy Father calls upon us to go to the peripheries of life looking for all those who need the joy of the Gospel. The Apostolic Exhortation says: "Business is a vocation, and a noble vocation, provided that those engaged in it see themselves challenged by a greater meaning in life (no. 203)." Mr. Sfeir's deeds, just like his sayings and his face, all reflect his heart.

There's also a heart in the name of the bank which he presides: Beirut, the capital of Lebanon is Lebanon's heart. Mr. Salim Sfeir, is at the heart of Lebanese society, in its diversity. For this reason, prominent personalities are present among us today to honor Mr. Sfeir at our university. We thank you all for sharing with us this ceremony. I would like to express my congratulations to Mr. Sfeir's spouse, Mrs. Marie-Claude Osseily Sfeir, for another success achieved in her family. Referring to the concept of the heart, I would like to talk about your family name, Mr. Sfeir, your family is in the heart and conscience of Lebanon, a family from which the Patriarch of the Maronite Church His Beatitude, Mar Nasrallah Boutros Card. Sfeir emanated, holding office for 25 years, and to whom I would like to express my gratitude for his fatherly presence between us today. Between the heart and the head, resides the story of the human moving forward in life, and here, I cannot but express my gratitude to our head His Beatitude, Mar Bechara Boutros Card. Rai, our shepherd and father, represented by the Most Reverend Patriarchal **Vicar General Archbishop Paul Sayah**, who will read His Beatitude's testimony about Mr. Salim Sfeir, who is about to receive the insignia of Doctorate *HonorisCausa*.

Mr. Salim Sfeir, Greeks talk about friendship in their ancient civilization, by saying that friends have one heart, and they share the same values, principles and ideals. It is the logic of the heart that you share with the Lebanese Maronite Order in general, and the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK) in particular. I would like to convey to you the greetings and appreciation of the Most Reverend Superior General, Fr. Abbot Tannous Nehme, whom I would like to thank warmly for his presence among us, and for his overwhelming love to the Order. You uphold a remarkable number of the values of the Order. I cannot help keep saying that Lebanon is in the heart of the Order's name, the "Lebanese Maronite Order", and its heart is for Lebanon whereby it serves every human being, in many aspects, among which Higher Education, based on the will of the heart of the Church and its love for the human being.

Mr. Sfeir, the concept of the heart is embedded in your personality, amidst your remarkable success in the business world. Thus, we can understand the relationship between the heart and the Doctorate *Honoris Causa* in Business and Commercial Sciences. To this end, on behalf of the Council of the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, whom I would like to thank for its decision and presence among us today, it is my pleasure to lay on your shoulder the gown of the heart and business, the gown of the Doctorate *Honoris Causa* in Business and Commercial Sciences, which is the mark of your excellence in Business. It is a Doctorate from the heart, in the heart and to the heart.