



Speech of Fr. Hady Mahfouz

Symposium Syriacum

February 3, 2015

USEK

It is a great pleasure and honor to welcome you all here, at USEK, for the 3rd Symposium Syriacum and Arabicum. We have been, lately very active promoting and enhancing higher education ways of teaching, working on an Internationalization Laboratory and working on the accreditation of our Engineering programs and of our whole institution. Many activities took place in order to keep our University as modern as it should be, with an international openness in all directions. We believe that our university should be up to the era of globalization and of the fever of technological, natural and medical discoveries. Such a line would ensure

better the wellbeing of our institution and of all USEK members, namely, faculty, staff and students.

So this Symposium underlies a feeling of happiness for us because it responds to the concern of wellbeing. Let me quote the lyrics of the famous Syriac song: “Netdkhar enoun labohayn dmalfin waw lan kad hayin” which means: Let us remember our fathers for they taught us during their lifetime. And let me add to it: dmalfin lan baktobayhoun which means: for they are still teaching us through their writings.

I quoted this song adding the last sentence, since I believe that we owe a lot our fathers and forefathers. We are who we are thanks also to them. We breathe, even subconsciously, from the heritage they left to us. And in studying ancient texts we remember them and recognize what they have been doing for us.

Such a gathering is a tangible means to discover our real being and our wellbeing, meeting therefore, the positive objectives of the era of globalization.

We are aware of the fact that digging in the past literature, Syriac and Arabic, would not seem as awkward as it could be for some. On the contrary, such a noble activity would meet the quest for the wellbeing since it sheds light upon the real essence of life and goes in par with modernity and technology.

This reconciliation between heritage and modernity is shown somehow in the combination of new and old buildings on our campus. The yellow and symbolic building of USEK has all the technological requirements and the new buildings are an eloquent example of modernity.

Here, at the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik (USEK), taking care of the Eastern, Syriac, Maronite and Arabic heritage has been one of the favorite components of our mission. Our library, you will be for sure visiting, is a great witness of our deep interest in preserving, discovering and studying our heritage. I cannot here but mention the liturgical reform, fruit of the endeavors of many scholars at USEK, which took place in the seventies and eighties of the past century.

Thanks to that reform, the Maronite Church has a splendid liturgy, reflecting the old Maronite tradition nicely embodied now in the Arabic language. I would like to thank all of our monks who worked hard to make this liturgical reform happen and benefit all Maronites. Fruit also of the interest in the Syriac and Eastern studies is the “Melto dmadnho” (Parole de l’Orient) magazine. We are proud that our University is publishing it and so confident that our Department of Syriac Studies will go on taking care of it as it should be.

In that same line, Father Abdo Badwi, Head of the Department of Syriac Studies had the idea a year ago, of organizing this event. He had the blessing of Fr. Ziad Sacre, Dean of the Faculty of Religious and Eastern Studies and collaborated tightly with CEDRAC at Saint Joseph University in Beirut. Father Samir Khalil and Father Joseph Obeid had also a special touch in the preparation of this event. So, to all of them and to Father Roneey Gemayel, Head of CEDRAC, and to all USEK team, my heartfelt thanks!

In his letter to the Christians of the Middle East, on December 21, 2014, the Holy Father, Pope Francis said: Dear Christian brothers and sisters of the Middle East, you have an enormous responsibility and in meeting it you are not alone.

Well, the gathering of today illustrates one of the meanings of that statement. So I would like to extend my thanks to all of you who came from many parts of the world to partake in this event. We are eager in the Middle East to discover our heritage, and we are exhilarated to find out that other scholars are interested in this same heritage.

May your Symposium be crowned with success and may it reflect the beautiful combination of modernity and heritage.