

Workshop 4: A *Befitting Response*

Quotations

As grave as conditions have already become in some places...in countries that have so far been spared the more severe consequences of the pandemic must keep in mind that there is the potential for worse to occur... without alarm, but without delay.

Flexibility has proven to be an asset, but so has vigilance in ensuring that the primarily local character of community activities is not diluted; efforts to nurture flourishing communities within neighbourhoods and villages and across clusters must continue.

(The Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 9 May 2020)

As you are aware, the first Plan to commence this new series will last but one year. In places where circumstances prevent national communities from establishing as many intensive programmes of growth before Ridván 2021 as they intended, these twelve months will extend the time available to them to do so. Meanwhile, wherever the process of growth has already been intensified, the year will be an opportunity to consolidate the achievements made during the current Plan, while cultivating the conditions necessary for welcoming larger and larger numbers of souls into the embrace of a community recognized for its fortitude and outward-looking orientation. At the national, regional, and cluster levels, we look to communities of proven strength to help those in which less experience has accrued. In this year-long effort, every community must draw on whatever untapped potential it may possess and seek to overcome any obstacles that are impeding its growth, thereby preparing it for the demands to come. For it is within the context of a flourishing community, especially a centre of intense activity in a village or neighbourhood, and when each element of the Plan's framework is given the attention it requires, that those elements most visibly cohere and connect, multiplying the community's powers in the field of action.

(The Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the world, 25 November 2020)

Questions

- a) What are some principles that we should bear in mind in these closing months of the current Plan and as we prepare to enter the third century of the Bahá'í Era?
- b) While the One Year Plan to commence at Ridván 2021 will extend the time available for clusters to establish an intensive program of growth, what is the work in clusters where the process of growth has already been intensified? What role will communities of proven strength be called upon to play?
- c) What vision does the Universal House of Justice have for centres of intense activity in flourishing communities?

Quotation

To live to teach in the present day is like being martyred in those early days. It is the spirit that moves us that counts, not the act through which that spirit expresses itself; and that spirit is to serve the Cause of God with our heart and soul. (From a letter dated 3 August 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

... Before you, beloved friends, lies stretched out the blank scroll of the future on which you and your spiritual descendants will inscribe fresh and lasting deeds of renunciation and heroism for the betterment of the world.

(The Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the world, 26 March 2016)

Questions

- a) Which one of the early heroes of the Faith inspires you the most? Why?
- b) Considering your current circumstances and the environment in which you live in, what might be considered courageous or even heroic?
- c) Think of one act of courage you can undertake in the next two weeks.

Quotations

Blessed is the house that hath attained unto My tender mercy, wherein My remembrance is celebrated, and which is ennobled by the presence of My loved ones, who have proclaimed My praise, cleaved fast to the cord of My grace and been honoured by chanting My verses...

(Bahá'u'lláh, from a Tablet translated from the Arabic)

By My life and My Cause! Round about whatever dwelling the friends of God may enter, and from which their cry shall rise as they praise and glorify the Lord, shall circle the souls of true believers and all the favoured angels.

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited in *Bahá'í Meetings*, compiled by the Universal House of Justice, p. 3)

Ibeseech God to graciously make of thy home a centre for the diffusion of the light of divine guidance, for the dissemination of the Words of God and for enkindling at all times the fire of love in the hearts of His faithful servants and maidservants. Know thou of a certainty that every house wherein the anthem of praise is raised to the Realm of Glory in celebration of the Name of God is indeed a heavenly home, and one of the gardens of delight in the Paradise of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet translated from the Arabic)

Every meeting which is organized for the purpose of unity and concord will be conducive to changing strangers into friends, enemies into associates, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá will be present in his heart and soul with that meeting.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Abbas*, vol. 3, p. 553)

Hold meetings and read and chant the heavenly teachings, so that city may be illumined with the light of reality and that country become a veritable paradise by the strength of the Holy Spirit, for this cycle is the cycle of the Glorious Lord and the melody of oneness and solidarity of the world of mankind must reach the ears of the East and West.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Abbas*, vol. 3, p. 631)

Questions

- a) What happens to the house where devotional meetings are held? What are the effects of organising prayer meetings in one's home on the people that participate in them, on one's family, on the neighbourhood, the city and the country?
- b) Again, consider the reality of your own communities. Over the coming months, what steps can be taken to increase the number of devotional gatherings as well as the quality of the conversations which take place during them?