
Speech of the Rector of Antonine University Father Michel Jalakh
Wellness and Mental Health Week
04 March 2019

Honorable guests,
Esteemed deans,
Dear students and faculty members,
Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It is my pleasure to welcome you today at the Antonine University to share experiences and best practices during the Wellness and Mental Health Week.

أرادت الجامعة الأنطونية من خلال هذا المؤتمر، مؤتمر الراحة والصحة النفسية، أن تضيء على الأبعاد الإنسانية والحيوية لطلابها. نريد من طلاب الجامعة الأنطونية أن يكونوا سعداء، فالحياة تستحق السعادة، تستحق الفرح، تستحق التفاؤل، تستحق العيش. فالله ما خلقنا إلا لكي نكون سعداء .

إننا نعمل في الجامعة الأنطونية من أجل التحصيل الأكاديمي والعلمي، غير أن النجاح في الحياة بحاجة لمهارات موازية تساعد الطالب على تمكين هذا التحصيل من خلال تنمية مهارات إنسانية وروحية ونفسية، وذلك من أجل بناء علاقة صحية وسليمة مع أخيه الإنسان مهما كان مختلفاً عنه. فماذا ينفخ الإنسان إن تطوّر علمياً وازداد تفوقاً، وماذا يفيد الطالب إن تخرّج أكاديمياً وانعزل اجتماعياً؟ وكيف لي أن أكون سعيداً إذا كان من أعيش معه في المنزل نفسه أو في الجامعة ذاتها أو في البيئة أو المنطقة عينها أو البلد الواحد تعيساً أو بائساً؟ إن سعادي لا تكتمل إلا من خلال سعادة الآخر، وفرحي لا يكتمل إلا من خلال فرح من حولي. فلنعمل أداً من أجل تحقيق معادلة سعيدة للطرفين! **happiness-happiness situation!**

With this event, we aim to highlight the human and vital dimensions for our students. We want them to be happy since life deserves happiness; it deserves joy and optimism. God has created us for one purpose: to be happy.

At the Antonine University, we surely work to develop the academic and scientific achievements. Nevertheless, success in life needs parallel skills that help the student in strengthening these achievements. In order to build a healthy relationship with the other, whomever this other is, the student needs to acquire human, spiritual, and psychological skills. For what does it profit a person to progress scientifically while being isolated, and what does a student gain if he will graduate without being socially integrated? How can I be happy if my housemate, classmate, companion, next-door fellow, and compatriot live in misery? My happiness would not be complete unless through the happiness of my neighbor, and my joy cannot be lived if not through the joy of those around me. Let us work then for a successful happiness-happiness situation!

We want this week about Wellness and Mental Health to open doors for interaction between experts and students, to pave the way for a better society where mental health is not always correlated with illness or disability, but also with success and positive thinking as advocated for in positive psychology. This can enable them to cope with any situation, always looking for ways to live a

meaningful and fulfilling life, cultivating what is best within themselves and for the society. When a person learns how to think positively, he or she thinks how to support others who could be in difficult situations, those who could have special needs mentally or physically.

I hope by the end of this week, we will have worked on a clear collaborative strategy, a road map, leading to the participation of many stakeholders – experts and students – who will come up with solutions that respect human dignity, equality, and rights for healthcare with no discrimination.

To launch our event, we are happy to have among us experts in the field. I welcome Dr. Rabih El Chammay – Head of the National Mental Health Program at the Ministry of Public Health; Professor Myrna Ghannagé, a remarkable woman, expert in psychology and President of the Association for the Protection of War Children; Dr. Dominique Thompson – Expert in Mental Health Strategy and Clinical Care in Higher Education; and Dr. Khalid Saeed – Regional Advisor for Mental Health and Substance Abuse at the World Health Organization.

As we celebrate Ash Monday in the Maronite liturgy, we might remember that our Lord granted us the wisdom to find peace and serenity in prayers. May we use these gifts to help others find their way for a good mental health and for the wellness of all.

Thank you ALL for your presence.
May God bless us for a productive journey!