

Anta Akhi Newsletter

Serving a life of dignity for people with disability - April 2014



Jesus is alive !

He wants us to be alive like Him, and from His life !

God wants us to be luminous like Him
God wants us to be happy like Him
God wants us to be kneaded with love like Him
God wants us to love and forgive like Him
God wants us to be the strength of the weak like Him
God wants us to give our lives like Him
God wants us to be fools and wise like Him
God wants us to be meek and humble like Him
God wants us to be sons like Him
God wants us to be one like Him
God wants us to be unifying with Him
God wants us to be His Family, today, tomorrow and forever
What God wants, He does it only if I want!
And if I want, He gives me His Spirit. The Spirit achieves in me, what God wants.

Yvonne Chami
Founder - President

Dear friends,

"The story begins in Vietnam, full of images of war and full of faces that I might forget! But there is the face of this woman I will never forget. The tenderness of her gaze is imbued in me ... her presence is so effective! She had a name: Mary..." *Yvonne Chami.*

People ask: "What is your secret? Is it possible that you are always happy? Disability! Disease! Regression! How are you holding up?" Questions that are repeated with each new group that comes to visit us.

Our answer is simple: with Yvonne, we said "yes", just like Mary! We had the courage to risk the adventure of love! And we believed in Mary's presence in our daily lives!

She, who can do the impossible, who can give joy and hope to anyone who decides to open her heart, and agrees to be invaded by God, through His love.

"You are my beloved son, you are my joy!" This word gives us the certainty that everyone is loved as each has his place, his share of responsibility in the living body of Jesus, regardless of his potential or limits. This translates into our living together, our growth together in love, peace and complementarity. This occurs

when one realizes that this seed of love, which is already planted in our hearts, and in our lives, can grow and bear fruit... provided we say "yes!" provided we open up our hearts and become presence of love for you, my brother!

When we engage together, agreeing to give our heart to others, one can discover this profound happiness of loving and giving life, despite the difficulties; one can discover the joy of being with Jesus, alive, resurrected, and being with you, my brother.

Dear friends, on behalf of the whole family of Anta Akhi, I wish you a very Happy Easter.

Christ is risen! And we are witnesses!

Roula Najm
General Manager



The families of our youngsters, yeast despite the departure of their beloved

They are born into the world of the Father ... Rana in 2013, Pauline in 2012 and in 1998 ... Roger. Their souvenir remains in the memory of all those who loved them: their relatives, friends and those who knew at the Home of Tenderness and outside. How can we forget our youth? But most importantly, how can we forget when their parents do not forget they once had Anta Akhi as a second family?

Mrs. Kiddissi Pauline's mum (who used to come at Anta Akhi during weekends, suffering from multiple diseases) says very moved: "Pauline draws me to Anta Akhi; this family became a part of me. When I come here, twice a month, I get rid of my stress and I work with all my heart where there is need, and especially in the kitchen! I really want to be present for Anta Akhi and give something... I feel as if Pauline would smile up and be happy."

Mrs. Ziadé Rana's mum (who used to come during weekdays, suffering from a degenerative disease): "I like coming to Anta Akhi, mainly for the Mass; I don't come in an association, but in my second family, my second home and I am really good. I like to talk with the youngsters and with the team: all those who Rana and whom she loved, those whom I love with all my heart today ... The separation from my daughter is very hard, but I am comforted because God gives me the strength to

continue and because I 'm sure Rana is happy.

Romy, Roger's sister (suffering from a degenerative disease): "Roger is still very present in my life ... I have an angel in heaven! Today I am 19 years old and I thought it was time to know how my brother used to live. When I came for 2 weeks at the Home of Tenderness, I saw how the youngsters exceed difficulties with Jesus. Here, there is a lot of love. It is "so beautiful!"



Seminar 2014



To you, our friends who take part in what we build together through Anta Akhi and the project "Disability and Life in Church"
We take advantage this circular and this blessed period to invite you to our fourth seminar

**"The Church, Mother and Educator
in its imperative responsibility
to support the growth of the child of God limited by disability, in all stages of his life course"**

which will take place Friday, May 23rd, 2014, from 9h to 17h,
at the Notre Dame University Louaizé - Issam Fares Auditorium,
and will be concluded by the First Communion of 16 children from Sesobel,
Saturday, May 24th, 2014, at 10h30 - the Maronite Patriarchate - Bkerké.

Through this seminar, we want to share with the Church, Mother and Educator, our experience of over 35 years which has given its fruits. These children of God limited in their autonomy of life by disability, who were accompanied in their life course, have managed to live in peace and joy, despite the heaviness of their disability, have succeeded in bringing parents and families to live this peace and joy, and have brought all those who saw them to ask questions... We would like to communicate to our pastors (bishops and priests) the experience and the concern related to the growth of

God's children who are limited in their autonomy of life, because of their disability.

Through our "living together" in the Church, we can live better in line with the "yes to life" when it comes to a child limited by disability. This "yes to life" is primarily a "Yes to my child" that should be said by the mother, the biological family; it also should be said by the Church, Mother and Educator, who baptized the child, and became a child of God and a member of the Body of the Living Jesus, the Church.

We are all concerned in considering the ways in which every child of God, this member of the Body, the Church, live as a witness of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit, with Mary, Queen of the impossible, give us an appointment, to do wonders in each one of us, for the growth of the Body of Jesus, by the growth of every child of God, especially the one limited by disability.

In great hope, we are waiting for this time of ecclesial reflection.

We're hoping for the joy of seeing you at the seminar.

Our youngsters express themselves...



Madonna sees Layale, very tired. She looks at her and without saying a word, she goes to the kitchen and prepares a lemonade. She presents it to Layal saying: "You tired... you my darling... me I love you."

Paul declares to Jessica Jessica: "Jessy, you are beautiful, from the inside and from the outside."

Marianne comes back to the Home of Tenderness, after a few days spent at home, with her parents. When she came, she expressed herself: « Me, at home, I was feeling lonely without my friends. When I came back, I found joy again, especially when I saw my friends happy and laughing... and so I started to laugh with them. I felt as if you were my brothers and I love you so much. I felt I wanted to pray to each one of you. Mirna, Jessica and Marie-Thérèse, when I hold you in my arms, you give joy and love... you are so tender... Jeannette too. Thank you so much for loving me. When I see you loving me and hugging me, I start to cry Thank you.

Samo sees Elisabeth – volunteer in her 2nd year at Anta Akhi – come back from a trip: "So you had fun?" Elisabeth answers back: "yes and now I am back home". Samo thought and replied: "But it's Anta Akhi, it's not your home." Elisabeth: "of course it is » Samo and after thinking replied again: "yes, you are right, Anta Akhi is your home... and mine too..."



For a change in the look of the society...

The overall mission of Anta Akhi and the Project Handicap and Life in Church aims to bring about a change of perspective - through training and awareness - to rehabilitate the physically able persons in their relationship with the world of disability, and promote a "living together" different and complementary, in peace, joy, and love, as brothers. It also prepares our youngsters to realize that disability is not their nature; it invites them to refuse the reducing look of the society and discover their true value as human beings, to live in dignity every day, and sow joy and peace, through love.

But what look are we talking about? Our youngsters tell their experiences in the heart of society; painful experiences, incomprehensible and sometimes humorous...

Having disability means being a saint?

- One person one day Carole touched and made the sign of the cross.
- "Pray for me, thy prayer is heard. "
- A person is a day kneeling in prayer facing Marianne ... The latter laughed!
- "You are holy!" Comment addressed to young people and their carers.

Having disability arouses pity? Disgust? Our youngsters testify:

- Often people look at us with pity. We are entitled to the usual "haram" *poor ones!*
- Sometimes we detect fear in the eyes of people.
- Others look at us with disgust.

- Some take us for children although we are adults! Their eyes, words and actions are infantilizing!

Having disability means being a beggar?

- Once a lady put some money at Carole's wheelchair. The latter called with all her voice: "Lady! I am not a beggar! Lady! I just have disability..." And this lady apologized all confused...

Having disability or not having disability...

- A person touched one day the head of our youngsters, saying: "May God heal you!" But she did not notice that a life companion was sitting among our youngsters. Continuing her "routine", she put her hand on the head of the life companion saying, "May God heal you!"



Maybe some of us will recognize themselves in these attitudes that go with good intentions, but are the result of ignorance of the world of disability. How should we act in the face of people with disabilities?

The answer is within Anta Akhi's 10 foundations; these values determine our way of being with ourselves, with others and with what God created.

1. Regardless of the limits it imposes, disability may affect the body, the ability to communicate, it may affect the potential but it will never affect the essence of a person, everyone is a unique human being.
2. Therefore, regardless of the severity of their condition, every person is a human being and has the same value, the same needs and the same dignity as everybody else.
3. A person with a disability has the same fundamental needs as anybody else as well as the more specific needs related to their condition
4. As a child baptised in the name of Jesus, that child becomes a child of God, Jesus gave him His Father, He gave him His Mother, He gave His Spirit, He also gave Himself, He died for him, and for us as well.
5. Therefore, any child of God has the same needs as we do, the food of God to live and grow, with us, like us, within the family, within the parish, within the Church and the community.
6. According to Jesus, there is richness in the differences between people, it provides a way to help us to live with the dignity of men and children of God, and build together a world where we can live together different but complementary lives in peace, in joy, in love. We can live as brothers, witnesses of love of the living God, the living and vital presence of Jesus, unified by His Spirit and Body. Living in the name of Jesus, of His Gospel, like Him. Is it utopia?
7. Isn't everyone a reflection of God's love? Isn't each of our lives a sacred tale written in the heart of living God?
8. My brother, aren't we equal? Haven't we received His Spirit? His Heart?
9. If we look at someone with a disability with the gaze of the Father and the Mother of Jesus, we will say: "you are my beloved son, you are all my joy"
10. We marvel at what the Lord did with us, for us. A lifetime isn't long enough to praise, glorify, magnify, celebrate and thank Him.

Mary... in the heart of Michèle and our youngsters

This great friend returned to Anta Akhi for a short stay last December: Michèle Altmeyer, a member of the Franciscan Brotherhood of Bitche – France, is also a member of our family. At Anta Akhi, she is at home! She is happy and she makes people around her, happy too.

Before her departure, she met with our youngsters, and everyone gave a little testimony about how they met Mary. Here are some excerpts: "The day of my departure for Lourdes, I felt that the icon the Virgin smiled because in Mary's eyes, I saw joy." *Ghassan*. "The Blessed Virgin is a friend, who helped me understand the love of Jesus for me." *Mirna*. "Since I've known the rosary, the day of the Annunciation, I started to get in touch with the Blessed Virgin." *Gharib*. Touched by their testimony Michele says at the end of the meeting:

Returning from Vietnam, it was the war in Lebanon. Yvonne gave each child with disability an image of Mary, Set El Beit. But it was not just an image. It was much more. She told each child: "Do you want your mom to take you in her arms?" She did not say: "When you're afraid, you press her image on your heart." But "When you're afraid, let yourself be hugged by Mary. This image, you don't take it, but it takes you."

...Today I get your testimony as a beggar. With you, I ask the Blessed Virgin that she teaches me to be so simple and close to her. And I have to recognize that you are deeply children of Mary, and you just showed me the way this morning. While listening to you, I thought: "Please Mary, make my heart as pure and simple as the heart of your children and put in my heart the same love."

Every day, for years, in my heart, I pray the rosary with you at 5:00 pm, because your prayer is so powerful. You are truly workers in the Kingdom of God. Listening to you, I asked again the Blessed Virgin: "Let me be your child." Please keep me in your prayers at 5:00 pm. And when I return, I will ask Mary, Set El Beit to help me testify how she has grown in me since this morning.

The lent as it was lived with the evening shift



This is Loyal who took a great initiative to live the spirit of Lent, with the life companions who work at night. Usually, when our youngsters are in bed, the team meets and chats around a tea. But...

"To strengthen the team spirit, we decided to let Jesus enter more, in our daily lives. Every Wednesday and Friday, in turn, each one of us prepares a little prayer including a passage from the Gospel, the life of a saint, a word of life...

Kamil offered to start at first: he wanted to keep the traditions; he prepared the table with the tea, lighted candles and distributed a "word of life" for everyone. Prayer followed for 10 minutes, but kept a great impact for the entire evening. Each of us was happy, and our discussions that night revolved around Lent, and we thought how beautiful it is to become like Jesus ... *at least during this period!* "



Our youngsters grow and their needs with them ...

Call

Dear friends, today we call to your generosity for the purchase of 5 masks and breathing circuits for our youngsters with disabilities. Thanks to these masks, Ghassan, Gharib, Barbara and others, can sleep at night without risk of respiratory distress. We also need an electric lifter and a height-adjustable shower chair to lift our youngsters, help them get out of bed, shower, and avoid painful backache to their life companions.

The total price amounts to 10,149 USD. Thank you in advance for your generosity and gratuity!

How to help AntaAkhi

1. Sponsor a young person from \$ 10 (or € 10) per month, \$ 120 (or € 120) per year.
2. Make a single donation possibly specifying the need that you want to support.

To make a tax exempt donation in the US, please contact sesobelusa@gmail.com

Thank you for being part of what we build together in our journey of life.

If you wish to receive our newsletter by email, please notify us on communication@antaakhi.org

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With the glance of Yvonne