

Letter of Fr. Dany Younès, Provincial of the Jesuits in Near East and Maghreb to the Jesuits in Lebanon and our Partners in mission

Beirut, October 23, 2019

Dear Companions and Partners in Mission,

The popular movement that is currently shaking the Lebanese society in an unprecedented way reflects both the suffering of our people and their yearning to build a new Lebanon, one hundred years after the establishment of Greater Lebanon. Many Jesuit companions, both Lebanese and non-Lebanese, have joined the crowds protesting for the birth of a State governed by supreme values, not just in words but above all in deeds. Those Jesuits are outnumbered by our partners in mission, both men and women, who firmly believe that this triggering event can generate a change in mentalities and structures towards a more abundant life and a better practiced justice. A tent has been already set up in Martyrs' Square where some Jesuits and USJ faculty are meeting, to concretize our wish to keep up with this wind of change, compelling us to first change ourselves and then commit to change the structures of injustice and corruption wherever they arise. Today's Bkerké statement following the summit of the Assembly of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops of Lebanon has given us a strong incentive to move forward in that direction.

The popular movement has broken down the barriers of fear and division among the Lebanese, as if it temporarily suspended the sectarian, feudal and partisan impulses that have long governed political practices in this country. It has also unveiled a kind of solidarity which does not rely on predefined affiliations but rather on the will to protect the dignity of every citizen. Though it is still fragile, this solidarity is a supreme value, and if it fails to mature, the popular movement will end up trapped in old conflicts.

From our perspective, this moment full of potentials is a crucial time, a time of spiritual discernment. From this moment, constructive attitudes can emerge, capable of preserving the spirit of this peaceful uprising and this solidarity; yet, negative attitudes can also emerge, bringing back people to the vicious circle of manipulation. Certainly, each one of us has his/her own interpretation of the ongoing events, but we are all called upon to adopt constructive attitudes inspired by Bkerké's statement and seeking a genuine spiritual discernment rooted in prayer and open to the new spirit that is rising among us and within us.

To this end, I invite all our companions and mission partners, each according to their own spiritual sense and circumstances, to seriously consider how the Society can invest its potentials, networks and institutions to learn from this popular movement, to take part in it and to support it so that it remains faithful to its spirit and vocation.

What we are imploring God for in our prayers, for ourselves and for the citizens and residents of this country, is to prove equal to this momentous time, and carefully watch how God is rewriting our history.

Fraternally,
Fr. Dany Younes, SJ
Provincial