

For Immediate Release



Beirut: 9-11-2017

## **USJ Rector Salim Daccache speaks at AUB**

### **on the history and future of Lebanon's two oldest universities**

The Anis Makdisi Program in Literature (AMPL) at the American University of Beirut (AUB) held its annual memorial lecture presented this year by Saint Joseph University (USJ) rector, Reverend Professor Salim Daccache. The lecture, titled “The American University of Beirut and Saint Joseph University: The Historic Dimension of their Educational Mission and Future Outlook” shed light on the role and history of Lebanon’s two oldest universities, recounting Lebanon’s history in establishing institutions of higher education and raising questions around the role of universities in tackling challenges in Lebanon and the region.

Attended by academics, experts, and administration from both universities, the lecture took off from the founding of both universities and covered five parts: the renaissance of the establishment of both symbols of higher education (AUB in 1866, USJ in 1875); a reflection on model personalities from each university (Dr. Cornelius Van Dyck from AUB, and Jesuit Chaldean priest Louis Cheikho from USJ); the role of both universities in reinforcing the Arabic language and disciplines; solidarity and collaboration between the two universities during the Lebanese war; the role of both universities in the intellectual renaissance in the region, merging East with West and solidifying Arab nationalism; and, finally, a discussion of the current and coming challenges that face higher education in the region: developing citizenship; preserving humanities, heritage, and the Arabic language; committing to quality education; and realizing the impact of research for human development.

Professor Daccache spoke about the parallel development and expansion of both institutions and their interactions as they crossed paths over the years and continue to collaborate for the benefit of both universities, Lebanon, and the region. He listed the mutual ethics that both AUB and USJ go by, such as excellence, humanitarianism, dialogue, respect, preservation of heritage, diversity, service, freedom of thought, and liberal education, and said that “dialogue, respect, and similarities, rather than competition” characterized the relationship between the two institutions

over the years. The mutual mission for both institutions, he added, were always “human, economic, social, and intellectual development for our societies.”

“Both universities have made major contributions in different fields since their establishment and despite local, national, and regional challenges,” said Professor Daccache. “Much responsibility falls upon our universities and on the higher education system as a whole to complete and renew what both our universities have done over the years for Lebanon and the Arab world.”

Twenty-sixth rector of Saint Joseph University since 2012, Professor Salim Daccache holds two PhD degrees, in philosophy and education sciences, and a Master of Theology and Philosophy. An accomplished scholar, Professor Daccache is also president of the Lebanese Group for Friendship and Christian Islamic Dialogue (GLADIC), member of the executive board of the International Federation of Universities, and vice president of the board of directors and vice chairman of the board of L’Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF).

“In a period when the entire Arab World is in tremendous upheaval, when Lebanon’s future is fragile, Professor Daccache has stepped forward as an educational leader of national significance, one committed to the well-being of future generations in a transparent, collegial and ethical manner,” said AUB President Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri. “He serves as a vital partner in the process of evaluating, harnessing and improving Lebanon’s educational programs ... His presence as a role model and as a partner in these challenging times is what makes Rector Salim Daccache our brother in the efforts to ethically empower tomorrow’s youth, and a most distinguished recipient of this year’s Anis Makdisi Lectureship. Lebanon will flourish in these circumstances only as AUB and USJ go, and as far as our deepened links grow and endure. In Père Salim Daccache, we have the man that AUB has long looked for to help bring USJ, AUB, and Lebanon forward into better days.”

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## Note to Editors

### About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 130 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 420-bed hospital.

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