

Our life at Anta Akhi

Serving a life of dignity for people with disabilities



December 2017



Dear friends,

May the Word of the Father, Jesus, Son of Mary, Son of the Father,
light our heart, our spirit by the Holy Spirit,
To change our way of being and to think,
To make of our life His proclaimed Word,
Announcing and realizing His joy, His peace,
For every man, all the humankind...
Then we will never cease to proclaim God's glory
with the angels, the saints,
and give thanks for His Love for everyone.

*Yvonne Chami
Founder*

At midnight...

It's so beautiful to get united, young adults with disabilities and members of the team to celebrate « Christmas together », it's also beautiful to visit our young adults who are home-based, the 24th of December to bring them Jesus Alive in the Holy Sacrament. All Christmas atmosphere carries joy: the reception of friends, the singing, the animated evening...but mostly, Christmas is about the birth of our Savior, and at the Home of Tenderness, we wait Christmas night to give thanks for the incarnation of Jesus...

He made himself the smallest! And the disability makes of us small people in the eyes of the society. But through His smallness, He raised us and we recognized our greatness of sons, children of God. Vreij, Johnny and Imad, suffering from multiple disabilities who preceded us to the father this year, weren't they seen as small by the world? Who can say what greatness, what joy, they are enjoying today?

He was completely vulnerable, depending on his parents, as a new-born... If a child gets self-sufficient bit by bit, our young adults stay dependent of the able-bodied. What would Mikael become without his life companion? Christopher? Carole? Mélanie? They are unable to live without the presence of able-bodied persons to their side.

He was poor, he was born in a manger. Our young adults live inside the great family Anta Akhi, and they have no possessions...But even before speaking about material possession, isn't the society that qualified them as « poor » and put them in this category just because of their disability. How many times did Tony, Philippe, Rita, Marianne, hear people say: « Oh how unfortunate he/she is! ». But after all, isn't this lack of possession, the true wealth?

They wanted His death; he should have not even come to life! How many embryos are eliminated today, especially if a disability is suspected? Then what, Fadi shouldn't have been born? Claire?

Mirna? Samo and Aïda? Their wonderful life testimony isn't enough to say that every life must be lived as a celebration?

And there was Mary... who stood next to Him... she didn't understand but kept all those things in Her heart... And our young adults' parents didn't understand why. Why them, why their child. If the answer to this question seems hard at birth, maybe they will have an answer later? By looking at the cross? As a road to the resurrection?

But we are still at Christmas and we celebrate it in joy. It is midnight, we are all gathered around Jesus, in this living stable that Anta Akhi is... the bell rings... the mass starts... The bread turns into Christ's Body, this bread that reminds us of Ghassan, Barbara, Marcelle, Elie, Pierre and so many others : Its shape doesn't express its essence. And our young adults, should we limit them to their disability? Are they their disability? Isn't their nature to be humans, children of God, brothers of Jesus born today in our heart and in our life? Brothers of The One they assimilate so much in this holy night? Merry Christmas! Christ is born Alleluia !



SOS! Joy of a call! At the dawn of our 25th birthday

In today's society, we come across multiple crises, at the economic and values levels: possessions have become more important than "being". It becomes tempting and easier to fall back on ourselves and our relatives, to save our life and our goods.

Despite this reality, I would like to talk about the beauty of our society, this beauty we experimented during the two months of July and August, very hard for Anta Akhi's survival. I would like to talk about all the beautiful things that were done, all the initiatives of solidarity that we perceived through our SOS call of last July, that I describe today as the "Joy of a call": since we launched this call, we received words of encouragement, of solidarity, donations in money or in kind, small gestures which enlightened our daily life with little stars of hope. A unique solidarity chain has been created; we perceived a great amount of love from our friends in Lebanon and elsewhere.

This presence pushed us to realize more and more that God lives in every single one of us and he's the source of everything good! For me, one of God's faces, is this spirit, this energy, this dynamism that all our friend have made us live during these two months, and which have pushed us to go forward, without fear, putting all our trust in Mary, Set el Beit, *Mother of our home*, Queen of the impossible, who is and will always be the heart of the Home of Tenderness, Anta Akhi.

For 25 years it has been our reality. It's with Mary that we've been through 25 years of trust despite all difficulties: it's true we've made our share, but she always did hers, the share of the Mother of our home.

And you dear friends, you are the most beautiful part of Mary! Many thanks to all of you who are all across the world; thank you for being for the past 25 years, a strong link in our chain of solidarity, each one depending on his charisma, his donations, or the time he shared with us. You committed yourself to develop and consolidate our survival. You gave yourself freely, you engaged in a mission you loved and adopted until it became a source of joy! The challenge is still here but with you by our sides we are sure we can face it!

Thank you for this fidelity! Thank you for the joy you gave us.

May we always be able to express to each others the huge love we received in abundance from our creator, this love which incarnates every Christmas, who is alive today in our daily life, and that each one is called to incarnate around him.

**From the great family of Anta Akhi,
Merry Christmas and happy New Year 2018 to everyone!**

*Roula Najm
President, Director General*



Following the launch of our call, some initiatives in Lebanon and abroad

We give thanks for every member of the great family of Anta Akhi. Your testimonies of solidarity are numerous, and your love was marvelously translated in acts.

When Roula, gathered in a meeting our little family, young adults with disability and members of the team, she told us the situation, we noticed great proves of love : the young adults doubled their prayer, 12 new sponsors have been found thanks to the members of the team, the income of days of work outside Anta Akhi have been offered. The ideas emerged from everywhere! All our family was mobilized!

Our friends outside Lebanon also answered positively to our call. We don't know what they have sacrificed to help us, but we received a really touching letter with a donation of 1000 through a friend that states: "In the day of the 43rd anniversary of our daughter Claire, we send this check. We thought our backyard deck, which we wanted to remake after 38 years of effective and loyal services, could wait until next year. Greet all the team of Anta Akhi, encourage them as well."

The Anta Akhi ladies' committee, for its part, met in our offices and gave us a full availability: "What can we do to help?" The ladies decided to do the "Cinema" activity which consists in the reservation of all the movie theaters in a mall and give the profit to Anta Akhi.

Dear friends, you confirmed us more and more that our Father, through Mary, Set el beit, *Mother of our home*, watches over His children : it is true that we have every months the right amount to cover our expenses, but isn't it us who repeat every day with a lot of confidence: "Give us this day our daily bread." Well, it appears that the Lord is really mindful to our prayer...



Flashes of our family's life

- **Archbishop Jean-Pierre Cattenoz** from Avignon did his 7th stay at Anta Akhi to help us think deeper about the project Anta Akhi and Handicap and Life in Church, and familiarize our young adults and Anta Akhi's team with the Word of God.

- We welcomed **4 priests from Togo** for a one month stay last July, as part of the project Handicap and Life in Church -Growing together. Their stay among us allowed them to familiarize with the existential training, and to put in place the practical steps to initiate a change in their parishes.

- Still as part of the training and the Handicap and Life in Church project, **Elisabeth Chaumont**, a French volunteer got back to her country after 5 years spent among our family. A big thank you « Babette » for your faith in our mission and for all the love you put in what you did.

- Our **summer camp** which has been planned in Kfifane, was finally conducted in the Home of Tenderness; this didn't prevent us from living 2 months of daily celebrations: the young adults, with their parents, brothers and sisters, friends, and volunteers from Lebanon and abroad.

- For our 25th celebration, a small group which represents our young adults, team members, friends, made a visit to the **Presidential Palace**, welcomed by the First Lady, Mrs. Nadia Aoun, and greeted by the President, General Michel Aoun. It is Fadi (who doesn't see, hardly hears and is in a wheelchair) who mostly moved the audience by claiming loud and clear: "Life is beautiful".

- A big thanks from our heart to the first Lebanese team who compete in the **Rally Dakar** and who chose to support Anta Akhi: Antoine Iskandar and Jad Comair fully committed to our cause : the benefits of their team's sponsoring will go to our young adult. Want to give a hand? dakarlebanon.com



Jad and Antoine in Morocco preparing for the Dakar



Jad visiting Anta Akhi



Babette with Carole



Father Damien with Barbara



Visiting the Presidential Palace

Our young adults suffering from disability are waiting you to share together the joy of Christmas

Fr 15 dec. at 08h00 am: Worship followed by a mass at Anta Akhi, at the Home of Tenderness – Ballouneh.

Th 21 dec. at 05h00 pm: Christmas Mass with the children and youth of Sesobel and Anta Akhi at the ND of Loueizé convent– Zouk.

Su 24 dec. Before noon : « Ambulant Christmas, Jesus comes at home », home-based visits to our young adults and their family

Su 24 dec. starting 08h00 pm : Celebrating diner followed by the **Midnight mass at 11h30** at the Home of Tenderness – Ballouneh

Mo 25 dec. During the day : Our home is open to welcome all our friends !

Mo 26 dec. at 11h00 am: Meet us at harissa for the Blessed Virgin's congratulation's mass.

Su 31 dec starting 08h00 pm: Celebrating diner followed by a **midnight mass at 11h00** at the Home of Tenderness – Ballouneh, then New Years Eve !

Mo 1 jan. During the day : Our home is open to welcome all our friends !

For more information : +961 9 230650

An uncommon stay...



Want to join us to live a unique experience? Want to get acquainted with an art of living in joy despite all difficulties? To step back from your daily life and give a meaning to what you live? Don't hesitate! They were 36 last year to give thanks for a period of time, lived, even far from home, in family. Below, some extracts of their testimonies.

I heard a lot of Anta Akhi at the Franciscan youth. I felt I should go, I felt there were something for me there. What I found here, is Jesus ALIVE! Jesus in every one! Jesus acting in this house! **Edwige**

I'm really amazed by all the work the people living in this house are doing. I think I never saw as many smiles and laughs than at Anta Akhi ! **Martin**

Thank you for enlarging my world, to welcome me here as one of your own and to allow me to live this amazing experience which will mark me forever. You are an example of life, keep this alive. **Lou**

When we are at Anta Akhi, it seems we are out of time and of the world as we know it. The disability's world opens our eyes on the deep meaning of life as humans and as children of God. At first we think it is complex and constraining. It's actually

much simpler it targets the essential: love, sharing, and help. We think that languages and disability are barriers. They are in fact gateways to a bigger closeness of heart. Under the caring of Set el Beit, my stay at Anta Akhi have taught me much more than to help disabled and the manners in how to live in fraternal communion. **Quentin**

If the fire of your love stopped burning, others will die of cold! The sincere affection of the life companions for the young adults, the simple but intense friendship of the young adults toward the foreign volunteers, toward the volunteer with a history diploma but green in love that I was, can't be compared. Although I don't share your faith, I can assure you that if I had the chance to be touched by God's grace as you feel, you would be the main reason! Thank you a lot, **Adrien**.

Anta Akhi – You, My brother – you, my friend

Of your life you can be proud, proud in the pleasure, proud in the sadness, Proud in your smile, proud in your tenderness

You are all unique,

You are all special

So don't panic

The future is beautiful

My friends don't be afraid

You are the most beautiful flowers

In the life's garden

You are the prettiest.

Thanks to you I went above and beyond

I learnt the simplicity I laughed a lot

I played, sang, danced.

I take you in my heart

My very dear brothers and sisters

Thank you for your love

I will think of you every day.

Thank you, thank you, thank you,

Anta Akhi-You, My brother,

See you soon, I hope **Sidonie**

Call

Dear friends, our call today is a call for prayer for all those who preceded us into the Father, members of your family and relatives. We especially pray to Mrs. Noha Najjar, a great friend, and ex-member of the General Assembly, and Vreij, Johnny and Imad, 3 of our young adults who suffered from multiple disabilities.



Noha



Vreij



Johnny



Imad

How to help Anta Akhi :

1. Sponsor a part of the support's cost of the life's path of a young suffering from disability, starting from 10\$(or 10€) per month, 120\$ (or 120€) per year. *Banque Audi – Iban : LB07 0056 0001 6520 8465 0440 1605*
2. Give a one-time contribution by eventually precisising the needs you want to support.
To give a contribution with a tax receipt in France, before please contact elisago.57@gmail.com
To give a contribution in Belgium, please contact l.hermans@skynet.be

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