



Anta Akhi

25 years Anta Akhi, 17 years the project Handicap and Life in Church, for the growth of the man and the child of God

Anta Akhi and the project Handicap and Life in Church are the same project serving the Church and the society. It's a new glaze on the "living together" with us and amongst us, all children of God and members of the Body of Christ, able-bodied or limited in our life's autonomy by disability, from birth or early childhood.

It's a project in the Church, and for the Church, which aims at putting the foundations for a culture, a way of life, a change in the look of the society, and a way to act in accordance with the Church's teaching and according to the logic of life of Jesus, express in His Word. Why? Because we believe that able-bodied and persons with disabilities, can live together their dignity of human beings and children of God, and live their mission as members of the Body of Christ, the Church, in their families and in their parishes.



We are all concerned, priests or members of the society, in the growth of the child of God in everyone we meet and with whom we walk through our life. We are all concerned by the needs of the person with disability: daily needs, health needs, rehabilitation or education needs related to the age and the type of disability. But... the danger is to confine the person suffering from disability in the jail of disability, to reduce his life to the world of specialists, and to forget the most important, which is to support his growth as a child of God.

The person suffering from disability has an urgent need to give meaning to his life, his humanity, his dignity, to understand, to succeed, and convert his difficulties in a message, and thus to overcome the difficulties linked to the disability he carries from his birth:

- Difficulties linked to the limits in the potential, as a result of disability,
- Difficulties link to the absence of social, civil and church structures,
- Difficulties which cause the most important wounds of his life, linked to the look of the well-beings who marginalize, segregate and judge him..

Anta Akhi and the project Handicap and Life in Church are not designed to be a project for the "disabled"; it's a project in the Church and for the Church, in the society and for the society, in Lebanon and elsewhere. This project demonstrated from its beginnings, that anyone, despite the difficulties of his life, suffering from disability or not, is capable:

- of living the joy whenever he passes it on,
- of learning the art of living together with the other, different and complementary, in peace, joy, love, as brothers.
- of participating in the growth of all children of God in each one he meets.
- of participating in building the Church and the society.



Anta Akhi 25 years of challenges, joy, and hope, despite the difficulties!

Is it an utopia? On what foundations, what values?



Some familiar faces... We recognize Tony, Samo, her mom, Barbara, Yvonne, Elie, S., and Aida

Anta Akhi! The way of the heart!

“With the world of disability, one should take the path of the heart. To take the path of the heart, is easier for them than for us. It’s faster for them than for us. And it’s through them that it becomes easier for us. They are our way to liberation. Because we are too rich and we don’t stake on what is important. I would say that they have nothing to lose anymore. They already lost a lot of things but they rediscover the meaning of life.” *Yvonne Chami*

Anta Akhi 25 years to say yes to life!

“Whatever the gravity of the disability’s effects on the body, the intelligence, the communication, the relationship to oneself, to others, to things, disability can never touch the “being”, a unique human being.” *Anta Akhi’s first foundation.*

The « yes to life » to say by the family, in the presence of a child with disability, is a « yes » which doesn’t only concern the difficult moments from birth, or from the time, disability was announced, but it considers the long way all through life: from the little childhood, to youth, to adulthood, until the great passage to the Father.

This “yes” doesn’t concern only the family; it must be a “yes” that commits society, Church, communities and associations, to face together the reality of the life of this person with disability, with all its requirements.



Yvonne next to Carole carrying a little baby

Anta Akhi 25 years of challenges to live the foundations of the dignity of the person with disability, in joy despite the difficulties! How?

“You are my beloved son, you make my joy.”

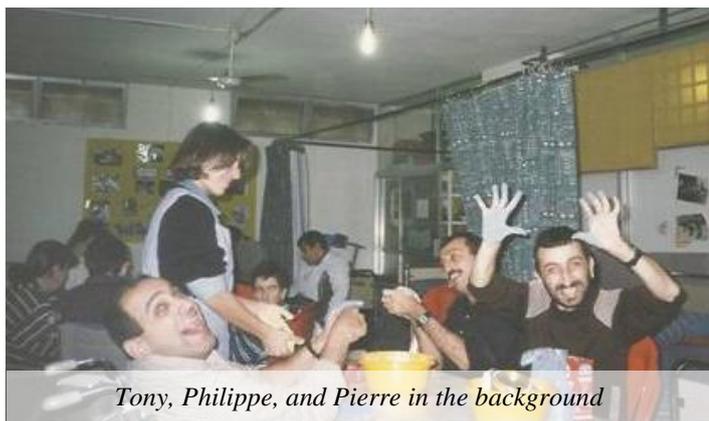
In Anta Akhi, we try to live our daily life, day after day, according to this starting point.

“I’m important, not because I’m handsome, or ugly, not because I walk or because I’m smart. I’m important because I’m God’s child, and therefore, I’m a person equal in value and dignity.” *Yvonne Chami*

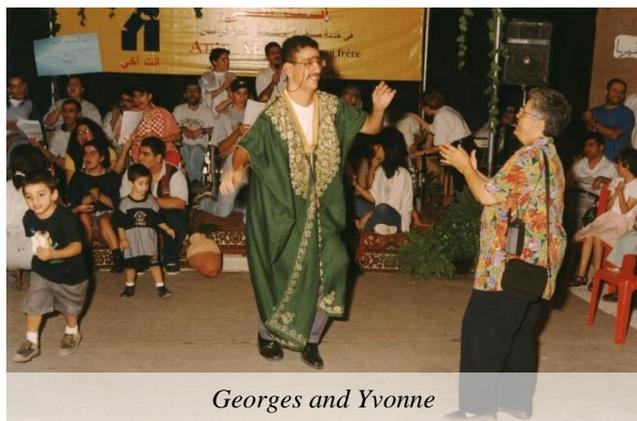
I’m important because I can make others grow as men and children of God. Whatever the weight of my disability, I can build in me and in the other person, the man and the child of God because I’m able to love, to irradiate love.

The handicap doesn’t count anymore. It’s the fact of “being” that has value, being God’s child, being brother to others. And this is the way we build everyday Anta Akhi, *You, my brother.*

Anta Akhi 25 years of challenges to live happily and make others happy! Is it possible?



Tony, Philippe, and Pierre in the background



Georges and Yvonne

As soon as we talk about adults with disability we hear people asking: what do they learn as a profession? What do they produce? What kind of activity are they doing? People rarely ask what we give them to be happy in life, and especially how to make others happy!

If we are really looking to make persons with disability happy, we have to take into consideration, in a practical way, their global needs, and to keep in mind their life's journey and all its requirements. If we consider the important number of people who suffer from disability, we notice that a small number can have access to a professional life, and yet, not

permanently; it depends on the type of disability and its decline. Another part can do some vocational activities, as painting and others. But a vast number, which grows with time, is part of the persons who can no longer "produce". What can they do with their lives? Don't they have any value in the eyes of the society?

The path we took at Anta Akhi with our young adults, and with everyone who is part of this great family, gave us the opportunity to discover secret roads of joy which depend neither on the health, nor on the events, nor on my mood or yours, but on the certainty that I'm loved, that my life is worth living,

because I'm someone and not something. My life has a meaning, and it can help others discover the meaning of their own lives.

Therefore what makes the importance of my life isn't the fact that "I have potential", as important as it could be! But it's the fact that I am able to put my potential at the service of this "living together, different and complementary, in peace, joy, love, as brothers". The art of living happily is every day's battle. Learning how to conduct this battle and getting out of it as a winner, is every day's challenge.



Marianne and Samo

Anta Akhi 25 years of challenges to build a project around the "living together"

In the family, in society, at school, in the community, we find people of every age, men, women, elderlies, youngsters, intellectuals, artists... This diversity is a cause of fulfillment: it allows the other to grow, to give himself, to put the gifts he received at the service of those who don't have them.

This complementarity where you give yourself, you're useful to others, you see yourself different and accepted, loved, encouraged, this "living together different and complementary", is the way we do it at Anta Akhi. Nobody is more important than the other, able bodied or with disability. The one who received a lot will put himself at the service of this "living together", and will be responsible of all the gifts he received from the Lord.

"The responsibility isn't a title of glory or an added value. We are all equal. To learn to live this equality, is a way for everyone to be free, whatever his status at home, his service, his disability, his health, whatever he can do. Each one is a man and a child of God, and each one must be loved, respected, and encouraged." *Yvonne Chami*

25 years of challenges!

Anta Akhi, a global support to train and do a continuous change to live according to the logic of life of Jesus.

To accompany the person with disability and his family, is to be there for him, to face difficulties together, to give him a look of love, in addition to all the special services linked to his disability.

To accompany, is to be a presence; it is to express this presence practically, while giving the importance to spiritual, existential and recreational needs. The importance of this support lies in the fact that it can be a breath of fresh air, and can give strength to all family members, and give them the energy they need to face the difficulties of daily life.

To accompany the church community and, through it, the civil society, means to change the way people look at the persons with disability, and make each one realize that he is concerned by the life of these persons and their families. We notice how much the Church and the civil society can, by their status, their behavior, their education, their values, and their orientations, increase or ease the problems of the persons with disabilities and their families.



Stages of construction of the "Home of Tenderness" - Anta Akhi year after year



What man do we want to build? What society? For what civilization?

Anta Akhi wants to be a place to train, accompany, and convert persons, to live and build together our human and child of God dignity, to live our differences without clashes, in harmony, peace, joy, in the logic of the civilization of love.

The art of living together can allow me to make of my life, with my brother, my family, the society I am living in, the Church, a perpetual celebration, a feast.

“The harder life is, the more this art of living is refined and is helping us refine. The difficulty is not an unbeatable obstacle, what is important is the way to face it, to handle it, to take position, to let it lead us or to face it together, with realism, faith, serenity, love and hope. Isn't our life a great adventure? A great mystery?” *Yvonne Chami*

25 years celebrated with the great family of Anta Akhi on the 8th of September 2017

We hope our family continues to grow under the protection of Mary Set el Beit, *Mother of our home*, and be a witness that it is possible to live together in joy despite the difficulties.

**Yes...the earth is my home and every man is my brother
Yes, we are all brothers... You are my brother... Anta Akhi... And I love you**