

“ If I keep my eyes fixed on living Jesus, I will have my eyes fixed on what the Lord is doing in me and in my brother, and I will be able to see the wonders He is doing. ”

Yvonne Chami

Founder



« The love that exists in my heart ... no handicap can touch it. » Barbara

Do not be afraid" habibi" honey, I love you, I pray for you." As soon as we walk through the door of the "Home of Tenderness", the warm welcome of Samo with her shining eyes, the smile of Barbara, the laughter of Michael,

the "ahla w sahla" Welcome of Elie... everything tells us we are in a family and takes us to another world. And we ask ourselves: do they really live like that? Is this warm welcome and this serene and peaceful atmosphere for real? Suffering disability and living joy at the same time is possible?

In fact, the fundamental question facing each person who comes to Anta Akhi, goes beyond disability, and exceeds the joy of living of our young adults with disabilities... it focuses on the look of people towards disability. Our visitors are invited to think why they came to Anta Akhi? Is it for charity? To hold a wish? To be present at the presence? Why are they here?

When I agree to adjust my look and when I succeed in transforming the purpose of my visit, to transform my thoughts, and when I agree to confess that I am there because I believe that every person is able to give me something beautiful and change my life, so at that moment, I will be able to overcome the damaged body and see the wonders in everyone. I could listen to Ghassan's voice telling me: "I'm not my handicap; I am Ghassan."

Each of us carries wounds and has difficult relationships. It is true that being at Anta Akhi means wanting to help, but it is above all a work on oneself, while becoming aware of one's inability to love. To love is not about doing something good. It is to reveal to others: whatever your limits, you are important, you are beautiful of God's beauty, you are treasured, you

have something to bring to the community and to the world.

"My disability is not a gift, I struggle to accept myself. Alone, I cannot succeed, but with Jesus and the community, I can!" Carole. Jesus invites us to be close to the weak, to meet those who feel alone. Mary, our Heavenly Mother, was there, near Jesus during his passion. She spoke to him with her look full of love: "I am here with you, I believe in you, I love you." That is the mystery and the beauty of the encounter that we are called to live together, towards the joy of the resurrection, towards Easter.

May we live with the other, "my brother", these moments of compassion, of true and authentic encounter. May we hear Jesus say to each one of us, "Do not be afraid, for I am with you." Isaiah 41, 10.

Christ is risen! Hallelujah!

**Roula Najm**

President Director General



## Madonna : in the Father's love



**Our dear Madonna was born in the Father's world on February 22, 2019, after some weeks of illness. Despite our pain, we can not help but smile when we think of Madonna. Mischievous, she kept playing tricks on us. Madonna gave us so much joy, peace and love! This is the beautiful legacy that she let us.**

### Daily joy, peace and love

First, Joy: we remember her smile, her mischief, and the laughter when she made some nonsense/silliness. She was able to put the entire house in motion, then disappearing at once ... She was "someone who distributed the joy" testifies a life companion, remembering how the smile of Madonna motivated her to come at night.

Secondly, Peace: during Mass, Madonna particularly loved to give the peace of Christ to others, and Rita assures that "she was the peace of this house", by her attentive presence, by her life of prayer.

Love, she lived it on a daily basis in her relationships. She was often seen helping Carole, Ghassan or the "chouchous" to eat or moving a chair. This love, she also showed it to the life companions: she waited every evening the arrival of Jeannette to kiss her with all her heart, loving her as her own mother. She embodied this value of Anta

Akhi: "Put your gifts at the service of others. She offered her hands and feet to young people who did not have them. She liked to explain the logo of Anta Akhi to visitors: "The two candles are us, and when one breaks, she gets closer to the other. Everyone needs help from each other and together we complete each other with love."

### A life built in Jesus

All this did not prevent suffering: the death of her parents, her disability and her illness, the look of others. The unwavering support of her brother Bchara and her sister Maïssa were essential to overcome them. But most of all, it is her relationship to Jesus that has moved her forward. She began each day with a sign of the cross, looking at the sky from the window. She was going to talk to Jesus about her joys, her sorrows, her anger, knowing Him personally, and never forgetting to entrust Him with her parents and her family. She always pointed at the sky while talking about her parents because she missed them a lot. She is now with them ...

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"I feel that Madonna is here, she is still here with us and that she will help us even more." *Rita*

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### Thank you Madonna

Madonna, thank you for this peace, this joy, this love and this life of prayer that you have shared with us during so many years. We still feel your presence among us every day. Marianne would like to tell you this: "I love you very much, I miss you, you are my favorite friend, you are my sister. I think of you, always." You remain in our hearts, and we are in hope that you rest on the heart of Jesus ablaze/ burning with love .

## Live a Lent of Joy

To prepare for Easter, we chose this year to reflect together on the letters of Pope Francis. Youth and team members took times each week to read a passage in group of 2-3, reflect together and pray. To exchange, to benefit from the perspective of the other to understand a text, to spend time with a person that we have not chosen but that we will discover better: it is already living two pillars of Lent, to pray and to pay attention to others .



# Raise awareness on the world of disability

Rehabilitating the healthy people in the world of disability: This is a pillar of Anta Akhi that's why we welcome many young visitors .

## Middle and high school students

Eighteen private or public schools, sometimes coming from far away, dozens of classes from middle and high school several hundred students have come since September to discover our Home of Tenderness! Starting from a theme such as "the value of the human person", "living joy despite the difficulties", students reflect with our youth. Highlight of the day: the testimony from young adults living with disabilities to students, an "inspiring" and "upsetting" moment.

## Discover God's perspective on you

By seeing our youth testify to their importance in the eyes of God, despite their disability, students understand that they can free themselves from each other's eyes: "These people have opened my eyes to the importance of a smile, and the look that God has on me "; "I felt stronger because of them, they gave me joy and taught me how to value anything." Beyond a change of vision of disability, it is a new understanding of their lives that our youth offer. A beautiful gift that awakens in students a desire to give their time to help us ...



## Bring the students to go beyond the common beliefs

For the same purpose, we are working at the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik: we hosted 20 sessions of the Citizen and Civic Engagement course for nearly 300 students. Time for reflection, sharing, testimony of Ghassan and Joanna build the sessions to get students to overcome their misconceptions.

Joanna enjoys participating to try to convey what she has received from the existential formation. From a film in which she testifies, the students reflect and ask questions. She feels that students are doing something to grow, which she likes, even if it takes more time to convey the message than with high school students. Ghassan perceives a change: "At each intervention, there are more people and I feel that I am more accepted. I like going there, I feel that many people have changed their point of view on life, so seeing it gives importance to what I say, and they are attentive."

## You are our family! The Franciscan Fraternity

To survive, our home depends on 97% of donations, including 30% outside Lebanon. This shows how much the support of our friends is vital for us to fulfill our mission alongside our youth! We honor those who help us: today, the Franciscan Fraternity.

In the East of France, the Regional Franciscan fraternity (formerly of Bitche) has been a precious support for Anta Akhi since 1989: our friendship born in Santiago de Compostela has been strengthened over time. Together, laity (couples, families, singles), priests and consecrated people, take their steps following Christ, in the spirit of joy and poverty of St. Francis. Wishing to help Anta Akhi, they support us by carrying us in their prayer. Many of them stayed with us for a few days ... or six years for Elisabeth, a former volunteer. They also help us financially by sponsoring our youth through monthly donations.

Knowledge of our life and friendship for our youth, concrete support in our action, and confident prayer: here are the "ingredients" that make them partners and dear friends. Thank you to everyone for your faithful love !



## Our visitors of the year

Our home is open to those who want to have an experience with our youth. This is part of our mission of testimony, and many volunteers entrust us to leave transformed! Yoaqim, 23 years old, spent two weeks with us, as part/in the context of a human and spiritual formation in France.

"These two weeks at Anta Akhi have been very rich and intense. I have tasted the joy of giving, even in fatigue, of free giving. Here we enter the mystery of this sentence: "There is more happiness to give than to receive. It made me realize how much the man is made for love, to love and to be loved. Love is what makes truly human. All of us are capable of it. That's what I really felt here, especially with Marie. I was afraid to approach her. The whole stay I told myself that I had to go hug her but I felt that she was insensitive. I was wrong: the day before my last day, during the evening, she was all alone and I kissed her. Her closed face lit up, softened. She looked at me and laughed with me.

Through this reaction, we go beyond the sensible, the visible, to see the soul behind. Here we experience love. The youngsters are sometimes simple but great in their hearts, of the love, with regard to God. That's what staying at Anta Akhi taught me, it's an experimentation of the heart. "



"Her face lit up.": Marie with Louise, volunteer.

## The News from our home



This winter, our young permanent members had the joy of spending a day at the seaside with a great weather: barbecue, music and sun ... For the youth welcomed during the day, it was the opposite a trip to the **snow**: sledge, snowball fight or simple sunbath, there was something for everyone! The **Texas Day** organized by the logistics team was a nice surprise: American meal, folk dances, photos in cowboy costume, dart gun, everything was there!

Dr. Céline from USEK gave two lectures on **ecology and recycling**: our daily actions can change things! Dr. Salman gave at Anta Akhi **two trainings** to medical staff on **the Snoezelen relaxation method** using our Snoezelen trolley. Training put into practice on our youth and life companions, delighted with this relaxation .. **Dr. Salman testifies**: "Here, I am carried, especially because there is the chapel next door. Here, I do not prepare my interventions [...] and it's going very well, because I am carried. I am happy to meet the residents: I only have smiles. Nevertheless, they are hurt, they could scream. I have been working in the disability world for 20 years and this is the first time I see this. I live it like a gift. Anta Akhi, "you are my brother": is aptly named. "

### APPEAL

**Joseph and Tony** both suffer from an eye keratoconus, a progressive disease of the cornea, at an advanced stage. They see badly and **risk losing their cornea in the long run**. They must be operated **as soon as possible** to implant intracranial rings. The price of each implantation is 3000 dollars, a total of 6000 dollars to operate Joseph and Tony. Thank you in advance for your generosity!

### Sponsor a youngster from Anta Akhi

Sponsor part of the cost of a young adult living with a disability from \$ 10 (or € 10) per month

- To make a donation with a tax receipt in France, please contact [elisago.57@gmail.com](mailto:elisago.57@gmail.com)
- To make a donation in Belgium, please contact [I.hermans@skynet.be](mailto:I.hermans@skynet.be)

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