

Our life at Anta Akhi

Serving a life of dignity for people with disability



December 2016



*Yvonne Chami
Fondatrice Présidente*

Dear Friends,

In the circumstances of violence, fear and threat, and in light of the culture of death, decay and disintegration, and when the future of humanity is at stake, we ask ourselves many questions:

- After 2000 years of the coming of the son of man, who gives meaning to life? Is there still a place for Jesus in our world or he became a different age, an extinct civilization?
- Is there still any effect to his words, his life and his teachings on our life?
- How can we overcome our difficult circumstances with joy and hope?

Jesus tells us today as he did in the past:

“I am with you, I grant you the joy of my life, the grace of my peace and plenty of my joy”.

You are the children of the only son, for you to live the joy of everything I give you, at all times and places.

**Despite the circumstances we are facing, we announce that Jesus Christ is alive!
It's Christmas time!**

Let us transform the ugliness into beauty, violence into love and peace, noise into calm.
Let us open our hearts to the harmony of human being with the song of creation...

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2017

God sent the angel Gabriel to a virgin named Mary. He told her: “Do not be afraid Mary, for you have found a favor with God, now you will conceive and bear a son, you will call him Jesus”. “I am the Lord’s servant”, Mary answered, “may your word to me be fulfilled”.
Luc 1, 38

Since then, i.e. more than 2000 years, our Lord gave us everything by trust and love. He gave to humanity His only Son, He gave him without anything in return, just to change our hearts and overwhelm us with His love.

Mary accepted the will of God to become by the Holy Spirit, the Mother of God. What a beautiful lesson of humility, sacrifice and confidence she has given us.

The Lord gave us everything and is still. But, to what extent do we listen to him? To what extent do we trust him? To what extent, do we accept in this Christmas season to renew His humble love in our hearts?



O lord, give us the ability and power to submit ourselves totally to you and to your Son Jesus. Give us like Mary, the full confidence in you. Help us Lord to understand what you want to do in each one of us. You came to give us a new birth, the birth of love, so that we can see the beauty in each other. Teach us to see in each other, the love, kindness and mercy just like you saw in each one of us.

Thank you Lord because you gave us everything in Your Son Jesus Christ.

Thank you because You gave us a life full of blessings and love in Jesus Christ.

Help us to stay loyal to Your will and give us the power to listen to Your Spirit and understand what He whispers in our ears: “You are my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased”.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2017

*Roula Najm
General Manager*

**Our young adults with disabilities are waiting for you
to share with them the Joy of Christmas**

16 dec at 8h00 PM: Christmas Mass with the children and young adults of Sesobel and Anta Akhi at the convent ND de Louaizé – Zouk.

22 dec at 5h00 PM: Adoration , Mass in " Anta Akhi " – House of Haniya Balloune

24 dec before noon: " Jesus is coming " visit our young handicap in their houses.

24 dec starting 8h00 PM: Evening Christmas Followed by the mass in the house of haniya Balloune

25 dec during the day: " Our house is open " to Receive all our friends

26 dec at 6h00 PM: Join us at Our Lady Harissa to celebrate together the Holy mass to congratulate Mary.

31 dec starting 8h00 PM: New Year's Eve gala followed by the Holy mass in the house of haniya .

1 jan during the day: " Our house is open " to receive all our friends.

For more information please contact us : 09-230650





Our family under the protection of mother Mary

This gathered family welcomed last September his Excellency Nicodeme Barrigah Bishop of Atakpame in Togo for his second visit. The 10 days he spent with us were very fruitful in terms of achieving the phases of the project “Handicap and life in church - Growing together”. It also helped Bishop Barrigah know better the life of our family and experiment the living together able-bodied and people with disabilities. The meeting with our youngsters and their life companions showed him the importance of our mission. Hereafter some of their experiences:

Luna, a young lady with disability:

The older I became the more I realized that my disability is not going to heal. Hiding from people was my only protection. I used to stay in my room even if we had visitors. My walker was my enemy and I used to hide it because it always reminded me of my disability. With time and with the existential training I had at Anta Akhi, I discovered that my role in life is not limited to what I can do with my body, and disability does not change the fact that I am a human being and son of God. Little by little my life changed, and I started to have friends and spend time with them... Everything in life needs a decision.

Elie, a young man with disability:

My little brother never received his friends at home, until one day, he was obliged to do so because he needed to study with one of them. He told me: “When my friend arrives, please stay in your room, he might be afraid from you”. At that time, I was attending the existential training at Anta Akhi and I did not want to show my disappointment and anger in order not to lose my brother, especially that, for him it was a normal behavior. So I decided to overcome the situation in a different manner, I suggested to help him and his friend in their research and to play with them on the computer when they finish study. Everything went

very well! The mother of my brother’s friend asked to meet me when her son told her things she liked in me. So I gained the trust of my brother and he started concentrating on the person in me instead of my disability.

Jessica, a life companion:

When I stepped into this Home, the Home of tenderness, I felt the warmth of the family. Those young people gave me a lot and changed my life a lot. They made me realize my true identity and theirs: we are all children of God.

Layal previous life companion:

I would like to share with you my experience with the persons with different disabilities. They are like the Eucharist: the outside does not reveal the inside. When we look at Joe, Mary or Stephanie, we might wonder what do they understand? But Yvonne answers: “I do not have to ask what they can understand, instead I should ask what can I give them. And here, I can testify that the Holy Spirit works in them as he does in each one of us. I felt this in my relation with Joe, I used to tell him my joy, my sadness and my intentions. He played an important role in my life especially in my relation with Jesus. Joe loved the Rosary and the Christian songs, he knew as well all the periods of the mass. This made me

admire his relation with Jesus. Also, he knew whether I was happy or sad. He touches me a lot because he loves me and cares for me without doing important things or even without saying anything.

And Bishop Barrigah concluded:

I was very impressed; I don’t know where to start from. Each one of you has questions that illuminated your life even if the difficulties are not over. I think you discovered the love of God, He who does not differentiate between persons. Each one of you is happy to know that he is loved, and accepted in this community.

You gave me a message that I will keep: whatever our circumstances, we should never forget that for God, each one of us has a mission even if he has a disability. Your smile and happiness make me speechless. You are helping me in one of my priorities, that is helping people who are unable to find happiness and discover how much God loves them so that they become witnesses to this love, then, the able-bodied will see the joy through them and will let God change them. I ask for your prayers for my mission in Togo. I will plant the seed I took from here in Africa hoping that it will grow one day.



The unit Source of Resources A Wonderful Orchestra!

If we look from the outside, we can tell that the unit Source of Resources is responsible for generating funds through collecting donations either from friends, or through income generating activities, so that our youngsters may live in dignity. But if we look deeply into things, we notice that the unit of resources represents the direct relation between the society and “Anta Akhi”. What’s behind the success of this unit? The answer is simple: the human being comes first and the rest follows.

During the Christmas period, this unit comes at the peak of its activities to spread our mission and be able to satisfy the needs of our youngsters by answering to the requests of institutions and persons who want to help. All this looks like an Orchestra playing the Christmas carols: Chantal manages the orchestra and all the activities of this unit. Peguy is in contact with friends and contributors. She also greets them in their various occasions (new couples, new born babies), ensures prayers are done at their intention, and invites them to participate in the activities that take place at the Home of Tenderness. As for Diala, she looks for donors through direct contact with institutions and individuals. She faces both yes and no, and she accepts the rejection peacefully because her purpose is to secure the needs of our youngsters. At last but not least, Aziz, Elie F. and Elie M. do their best to collect in-kind and financial donations from friends.

This year Christmas activities are divided as follows:

- On 19th January a concert will be held by Carisma band at the Convente of Louaize, Zouk Mosbeh in favor of Anta Akhi: Thanks to Mia and to the band.

Greeting cards

designed by children of the team along with some friends will be sold at the benefice of Anta Akhi.

- Christmas exhibition will be done at Byblos Bank from 5 to 9 December in which there will presentations and testimonies.
- Reinforcement of the sponsorship program still constitutes one of the most important tasks of the unit, because it is the most reliable source of entries. Without forgetting the donations for Christmas, for which we thank our friends by a bottle of wine.

Given all those activities, we can expect one of the most beautiful Christmas carols, as Chantal said: “We are what we are today because of the whole Anta Akhi team: when our visitors see the joy on the faces of our youngsters and how much our house is clean, when the students spend an unforgettable day with them they look at disability differently. When people watch on TV the love of life of persons with disabilities, this makes them ask questions, it motivates them, and facilitates our work. So we are picking up what others have planted with love.



Our Celebrations

Celebrating with our youngsters is to thank god for all the times we spend together, to thank Mother Mary for the beautiful role she plays in our family, to thank our youngsters with disabilities for saying yes, just like Mary did, to live the great love according to God’s will, to thank our team members for their presence, to thank all the friends who believe in the beauty of our mission to live together in peace, love and joy just like brothers... In this spirit we have celebrated:

-The 23rd anniversary of “Anta Akhi” which coincided with the 40th anniversary of the Founding project on September 8, 2016 in Basilic Saint Paul, Harissa. This was an occasion to honor the committee for their commitment with our youngsters since many years. Thanks to all the friends who prayed with us especially Ms. Joumana Moudawar and Mr. Marc Naoum who glorified the lord through angelic songs.

-The beginning of year 2016-2017 on November 10, 2016 where we wanted to celebrate the closing of the year of Divine Mercy at Our Lady of Lebanon, Harissa which also holds a door of mercy. And during this unforgettable day, we honored members of the team who spent with us 15 years (Hala & Charly) and between 5 to 10 years (Peguy, Layal, Nada, Diala, Maha, Eva, Jean, Mirna, Laura, Elie M. and Maya A.). And here are some of their testimonies:

What is “Anta Akhi”, is it a school? A working place? A home? A small church? I don’t know, but what I do know is that “Anta Akhi” is all of this. I changed... I understood my role; I became more comfortable with things. I no longer see the disability in our youngsters, we became friends, we have fun together! Life only continues with love. With the good will, and people who sacrifice themselves for others, one can overcome difficulties. Thanks to our youth, to every member of the team, you make a family where it’s good to live and walk in a path of joy.



Hélène Séchet... A testimony that goes directly to the heart

Helene Sechet, a 27 years old French woman, newly married and specialized in the speech therapy came back to "Anta Akhi" in November 2016 after having stayed for 2 weeks in 2015. She shares with us a touching testimony about the days she spent with us:

The family

"Anta Akhi" made me realize again the meaning of the family and how important and joyful it is to live together. The love, the forgiveness that exists among the youngsters and their life companions, helped me find out that love can be strong enough to overcome fear and pain. I discovered also that people need each other and trust should be strong to put in love.



The prayer

The mass at "Anta Akhi" is not limited to prayers where each one goes back home. It's a festive moment that is renewed each time and becomes a daily habit. You always pray the rosary and you praise the Lord. At those moments I used to feel as if prayers are a breather for all. "Our Father" and "Holy Mary" are like breathing; they have a vital meaning. On the other hand, praying all day (morning, noon, afternoon and evening) makes you feel peaceful. And here I felt the presence of Jesus, and carols made me feel more this presence. Seeing those youngsters, how they pray and how they submit to God, teaches us how to pray. Seeing persons with disabilities make themselves so small, while they have big physical or mental limitations, is one of the most important lessons in life. Seeing people asking us to pray with them calls us to participate all together and become the children of God, all equal before him.

The disability

I came to "Anta Akhi" to learn how disability is lived, and how to live with disability (since we all carry it inside us), and how to help persons with mental and physical disabilities, with this spiritual "plus" that makes the importance of the relation and the work.. This spiritual whiff is very important in my relation with my patients and my colleagues at work. I say to myself I can be Christian in my work even if I don't have the right to show it like in "Anta Akhi". At first, I could speak little about my faith, but now I feel I have complete conviction to announce that God makes me happy and directs me. I don't have to show my religion but my acts and my presence for the others are the biggest proof of my faith. The purpose of my being here is to deepen my relationships, and not to despair in cases of suffering or incomprehension. Yes, when we are strong in God, we can share the joy with others.

I feel that in the presence of "Anta Akhi", my life is going better, I can share trust and happiness with others. Thank you "Anta Akhi" and thanks to all of you who carry the community spirit inside of you.

Call

Dear friends, while thanking you for your generosity, we would like to share our prayer with you during this beautiful season, and ask you again in this newsletter, to help us with the respiratory machine for Paul, for the price of 10,700 dollars. Please believe that the small drops of water constitute the large rivers.

How to help AntaAkhi

1. Sponsor a young person starting from \$ 10 per month, \$ 120 per year.
2. Make a single donation possibly specifying the need that you want to support.

To make a tax exempt donation in the US, please contact sesobelusa@gmail.com

Thank you for being part of what we build together in our journey of life.

If you wish to receive our newsletter by email, please notify us on communication@antaakhi.org

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