

Our life at Anta Akhi

Serving a life of dignity for people with disability



December 2014

It's Christmas today !



Can Jesus, Son of the Father, Son of Mary, live His life, in my everyday life? **It's Christmas today!**

Can Jesus grow in me, a continued growth that fills me, while "my self" decreases and vanishes? **It's Christmas today!**

Can Jesus say His Word, express His love, His tenderness, using my mouth, my eyes, what I am, what I do, to reveal Himself to the men, my brothers, and invite them to His joy? **It's Christmas today!**

It's Christmas today for Him alive in me, and for me, alive in Him. **Yes, it's Christmas today!**

I make a life path with Jesus, with Mary His Mother, led by His Spirit, so that every day becomes Christmas today!

Jesus wants it, realizes it today in you, for you! Do you want it, as He wants it for you? **It's Christmas today, for you too!**

Go through the darkness of the night of men, go in Hope, sow the light of life, through love that generates abundance of His joy, that nothing and nobody can choke. **Yes, it's Christmas today, for you too!**

Fear not, I am with you always, because I love you with the tenderness and love of My Father for Me! **It's Christmas today ... for you too, for you especially!**

"Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!." Luke 1:45

*Yvonne Chami
Founder President*

Lord Jesus,

So many tragedies afflict us, there are so many harms and wars around us ... Let on our own, facing the indifference and cruelty of our society, we slip into distress and despair.

With You Lord Jesus, our way is the way of peace, joy and love. You are the best Christmas gift! You are the friend of every day. You are the infinite tenderness of God! You are here, present in the weakness of a newborn to lift us out of our weakness. You made yourself small for us to grow; weak, for us to be strong! Praise be to you Lord Jesus!

I pray to you, Lord Jesus, in this happy celebration, for all those who suffer and mourn in silence; for parents who have lost a child or a loved one; for fragile and sensitive people. I pray for all those who feel lost, those who do not know the meaning of their lives, those who suffer in their body and spirit, those who feel abandoned,

those who know only loneliness. Lord Jesus I pray for those who do not know you yet.

Lord Jesus, alleviate our pains, soothe our hearts, help us to notice you approaching. You, who come quietly at any time in the impulses of our heart, help us to hear you knocking, so that we can draw from your source, peace, love, consolation and joy.



*Roula Najm
General Manager*

On behalf of the large family of Anta Akhi and the project Handicap and Life in Church, with our young people with disabilities, a Merry Christmas to everyone!

News from our friends

Anta Akhi France celebrates 10 years... We give thanks for all those years of loyalty, for the love and generosity of all the team in France. It is also thanks to you that life is beautiful for our young people with disabilities, despite the regression: you fully contribute to a life of dignity in joy. Thank you!

Togo in Lebanon. We welcomed with great joy, Father Emile Kodjogan and Father Didier Kalmassi for a 40 days stay, as part of the collaboration with Bishop Nicodeme Barrigah, Bishop of Atakpame for the existential training. Thank you for a presence in all simplicity!

October 3rd: start of our year and tribute Day to the members of Anta Akhi. Young people with disabilities and team members have participated in Yvonne's teaching, followed by the Mass and a lunch, all ended with a tribute to the years of commitment of Bouran (20 years), Leila and Abdo (10 years). For all these years, thank you!



The joy of Christmas in our « Home »

This is an appointment that is renewed every year: the birth of our Savior who comes to give us life, His life! And we try to live out of His life in the Home of Tenderness, doing our best to respond to his call, He who gives us Joy in its fullness.

It is in the joy and love that our young people with disabilities live their daily lives and especially the Christmas period ... but what about the members of the team? Those that are usually found in their "work area" office or other, how do they live Christmas in this great family? This year, between expectations and nostalgic memories, they are the ones who tell us about their experiences...



Laughter, joy, affection, friendship, intimacy, family ... are the words mentioned by team members to express their feelings at Christmas.

"Feeling Christmas is welcoming our friends throughout the month of December. The laughter of schoolchildren, the loving presence of volunteers, the touching discovery of companies or movements members, that come with their gift, all these, made our "Home" a joyful hive full of life, that only rests a few hours to start better...

Feeling Christmas is building friendships: by taking care of each other, we are happy to please our "secret friend", especially if that friend is one of our young people who cannot pay it back "materially".

Sharing this time with our young is to live "Christmas together" in a day that brings us together with the ladies of the Committee: and it is wonderful to see the enthusiasm of these, while they play with our young people and sing along, easily and with a carefree joy.

Sharing this time with our young people is going in their home, and bringing them "Living Jesus" in the Holy Host, since they would not be able to leave their homes to welcome Jesus even during that night, because of the heaviness of disability.

Enjoying Christmas is to see our young people happy and sharing their joy with others: last year, accompanied by seminarians, they were in the center of Jounieh; they moved passers singing accompanied by the darbuka and giving them a "Word from the Gospel"...

Enjoying Christmas is seeing our young people put all their heart to make beautiful designs that would ultimately beautify our greeting cards. It is to see them happy to be helpful in preparing the Christmas greetings for our friends in Lebanon and elsewhere.

Living Christmas is enjoying a glance, a word, a smile of our youth: it is to see Marcelle smiling to each and everyone, to see Adla distribute kisses, Joey hugging a schoolboy, Philippe overcoming his difficulties; it is to contemplate the angelic face of Kiko



Christopher; it is hearing Samo saying I love you, do not be afraid "Halet" *Hayete* (darling)!

Living Christmas is to be present in all gratuity for each other. It is to be marveled, while giving thanks for the beauty and joy that we live despite the poverty of each. It is to find back ourselves, acknowledge our sin, and depart again with a light heart. It is to go beyond sad memories to make others happy. It is to be comforted by Jesus, Host, present among us and in us. »

**Christmas Eve, our little family, consisting of our youth,
their life companions, referent people, close friends,
taste together the profound joy of Christmas,
the joy that comes from self-giving for the joy of others.**

It's Christmas! Jesus is born! Hallelujah!



**Feel like sharing the joy of Christmas with us?
We are waiting for you...**

December 18 at 5 pm: Christmas Mass with children and young people from Sesobel and Anta Akhi at the convent of Our Lady of Louaizé - Zouk.

December 19 at 8 pm: Adoration, followed by a Mass at Anta Akhi, our Home of Tenderness - Ballouneh.

December 24 in the morning: "Wandering Christmas, Jesus is coming home". Home visit of our young people with disabilities and their families.

December 24 starting 5 pm: Christmas Eve followed by midnight mass at 23:30.

December 25 during the day: our home is open to welcome all our friends!

December 26 at 6 pm: meet us in Harissa for the congratulation Mass of the Blessed Virgin.

December 31 starting 5 pm: New Year's Eve, followed by Midnight Mass at 23:00.

January 1st during the day: our home is open to welcome all our friends!

For more information: +961 9 230650

The daily lives of our young people with much joy, love, faith and hope

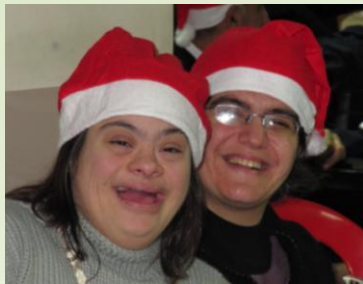


Between Marianne, Aida, Samo and Maria a young volunteer

- Marianne: Maria, I want to tell you a secret! *she whispers in her ear.*
- Aida: What did she say?
- Maria: But Aida, it's a secret I cannot reveal it!
- Samo: Bravo Maria you're right! You must not disclose a secret!
2 seconds later: uh ... Maria, what did Marianne say?

Jesus and Paul ... a story of union

- Samira: Jesus calls his disciples and they follow him. Jesus calls each of us by his name. And I, what will I respond? Do I have the courage to follow him?
- Paul: I do not have time for him...
- Samira: and why is that?
- Paul: why do I have to go to him? He is already in my heart!



Hope Rita K.

On the death of her father, our young people went to see her with Anta Akhi's team. We asked her: are you alright? Are you sad? She replied: "How can I be sad when Jesus is with me?" In this regard, her parents told us what she said to them:

- Rita: Dad is with his family in heaven.
- Her parents: Yes of course he is with tэта (grandmother), Jeddo (grandfather)...
- Rita: I do not speak of them! I speak of Jesus, Mary, our Father!

The ladies committee: presence of love, for Virgin Mary and our young people



Their presence in Anta Akhi, and their love for our young people, is part of their love for the Blessed Virgin. Because of this genuine love, they are present to the needs of everyone with love and mindfulness. It is thanks to them that Anta Akhi "holds the neck" to *paraphrase Yvonne* and manages to provide our young people with disabilities to live with dignity in everyday life.

To each one of you, to you Gretta, Violette, Marlene, Wadiaa, Sylviane, Nada, Andree, Liliane, Mona, Marie-Madeleine, Denise, Lena, Karine, Lynn, Ghada, Christiane, and Sana, a great thank you that comes from deep within our hearts and express all our gratitude!

Below are some testimonies collected...

- How was the ladies' committee formed?

It was in response to Yvonne's call that all started: Ya reit fi comité (if only we had a committee)! This first step was due to the Virgin Mary that attracted us all.

- What touched you most?

To see the young people happy where they are, to see them happy despite the difficulties, despite their disabilities is really moving. It is thanks to Yvonne who sowed in them that breath. For the able-bodied, it's a great lesson!

On the other hand, we notice in Anta Akhi a very strong spirituality and piety, next to the comprehensive care for the young people. We see that it would not be possible to move forward without the intervention of

Mary.

- Have you noticed a change of mentality towards the world of disability in your community?

Our friends know more Anta Akhi; they sympathize with people suffering from disabilities, are more sensitive to their cause, and are touched by their lives.

- The ladies of the committee seem very united...

Yes, basically, we are a prayer group. We have beautiful relations between us, based on a spirit of simplicity: there is no president, no leader, we are a family.

- After all these years, you are still present:

Our young people need us ... it's true that there are difficulties, but we do not give up,



we will not be discouraged. We do what we can for their good.

Every human being has a disability somewhere, we all need support, whether physical, mental, emotional or spiritual, and we cannot ignore a person who has a lack, cannot not walk... As Christians we are present here by love, not for any human glory.

- Thank you...

There is no need to thank us. It's the least we can do; we give as we can and we will not give up. We love you all!

- We love you too...

« Life is beautiful with *You, my brother* »

Marie Béthouart, a French volunteer, decided to share the lives of our young people for 3 months. Her discreet and loving presence, her willingness to help where need be, and her internalization of all she lives here, leave to all of us who live in the Home of Tenderness, a beautiful testimony of gratuity.

I had often heard of Anta Akhi, this home located in Lebanon near Beirut hosting people with disabilities but I was not a priori attracted by the "world of disability," I thought it was not my "charisma". In 2013, I was offered again to discover their way of life. Maybe it was the lure of travel, and the curiosity to discover the country, that led me to accept the proposition. I said yes to a trip in an eastern country, however, I quickly realized that I had actually said yes to an inner journey. A few days were enough to make me realize that between able-bodied and people with disabilities something true, something more powerful than disability, something I was not yet able to define, was attracting me.

In September 2014, I decided to return to Anta Akhi and to stay longer. Now it's been over a month that I live here every day. I work during the day in the existential training. I'm happy to take time for spiritual reading but I understood that it was not about raising knowledge. What young people and everyone in the house helped me to understand is that nothing is more important than knowing I am a beloved child of the Father, loved for myself, called to love in return because I'm created for it.

This is the strength of the testimony of the young people who prove that despite the limitations of the disability and difficulties in everyday life, life is not doomed and therefore we are not condemned by our limitations; we can achieve happiness! The secret to achieving this is to make the choice of love in all my relationships and my actions.

What makes all the difference in Anta Akhi is that my faith in my Christian life that was often only theoretical is rooted in the everyday's life and makes sense. What I read about the importance of love and self-giving, I can actually apply through all the requests, all the requirements of community life, following the example of all the people of the Home who try to live it. Young people never cease to amaze me with their openness to others and generosity; they are never tired of asking me how I am, what I did, how was my day. They give a lot of themselves and thus push me to give myself, to forget myself and therefore to be happy and make others happy.

It is by sharing the tasty dishes of the Lebanese cuisine that I understood the secret recipe that gives so many flavors to life: love received and given, love shared,



that gives small gestures another flavor, and takes life on another dimension; I decided to take seriously my life with God and therefore my life with others.

This emphasis on everyone's life is daily expressed also by the way I am welcomed, like any other visitor, by the particular attention given to my needs and the resources invested to make my stay pleasant in order to grow, and make love grow in this "living together".

However, it takes very little time to realize the difficulty of being faithful to this gift of oneself day after day. But again, all is not lost; I continue learning, to recognize that the world of the unseen is actually present and active. I believe that in deciding to do our part with our limitations, our imperfect and small means, Mary, Queen of the Impossible and the Holy Spirit will do their part and make it possible to live together in peace, joy and serenity everywhere, always and in everything."

Thank you

Dear friends, we can only give thanks for the generosity with which you responded to our call for the purchase of a machine that monitors respiratory diseases. This generosity has allowed us to buy another very important machine for all those who suffer from respiratory failure: the biphasic positive pressure ventilation. This second Bipap will allow Ghassan and Gharib and others to make stays with their families without risks of complications.

Dear friends, on the occasion of Christmas, our call reaches each of you: we pray with you for all our young people with disabilities and their families; we pray for you, who carry with us the worry of their life in dignity; we pray for your families and for all your loved ones.

May the Child Jesus, born in the humility of the crib, give us to live from His Grace, filled with His love.

Merry Christmas to each and everyone!

How to help AntaAkhi

1. Sponsor a young person from \$ 10 (or € 10) per month, \$ 120 (or € 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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With the glance of Yvonne