



## Message from the Rector to new students

Academic year 2023-2024



### *Let's unite to forge a bright future!*

Dear new and returning students, with the beginning of a new academic year, your involvement and proactive engagement across all USJ campuses hold immense importance. Here are a few key guidelines to assist you in making the most of your time here.

- a) Experiencing university life is fascinating, a perspective I've held steadfastly. Within the university, particularly at USJ, you grasp the reins of your life, unveiling numerous pathways that present opportunities for cultivating valuable relationships, engaging in intellectual pursuits, acquiring essential professional skills, and turning dreams into reality. Make your time at USJ an unparalleled and memorable period that will leave an enduring mark on your personality. Remember, surrendering is never an option!
- b) You've undoubtedly made a great decision by choosing Saint Joseph University of Beirut! For the past 148 years, and as we approach the momentous milestone of celebrating 150 years alongside you, this institution, founded in 1875, has evolved into a prestigious hub of education and innovation. Its graduates work across the country and the globe, contributing to diverse professions and the improvement of society. No matter where they are, these alumni are effectively putting what they've learned here into action to serve the collective good. The shared objective of learning, which both you and USJ embrace, consists of not only education but also one's drive to further their knowledge. This is how you can make a significant impact on your own future and that of your community.
- c) Amid these challenging times for Lebanon and the world as a whole, the risks of disintegration, loss of identity and disunity loom large. The prevailing crises and conflicts, however serious, pose a threat to our fundamental values like a persistent disease. As we face such circumstances, we should work on healing and growing our sense of belonging. As someone once said, the youth of the 21st century, in the wake of the pandemic, have highlighted the importance of both, the local and the universal human community. Belonging encompasses our ties to our family nucleus, local community, our beloved country, Lebanon, our dear Alma Mater, and even extends to humanity in general. Safeguarding these connections and drawing inspiration from them is essential for us to ensure that our roots continue to grow deeper.
- d) Similarly, we need values in our lives – values that represent goodness and truth – in order to attain meaning; otherwise, we risk plunging into absurdity and randomness. Take artificial intelligence, for example; while it is greatly useful, it also poses

a threat to human intelligence, and to humanity itself. These values, however, extend beyond the intellectual, societal and scientific aspects of life, and include the spiritual and ethical dimensions too! Hence, they are referred to as the common good, citizenship, intellectual integrity, a critical yet positively oriented mindset, freedom, humanism, faith and trust, mutual acknowledgment, brotherhood and solidarity. As young individuals, you should learn to discern the false messiahs of this world as they spread notions of demise and despair. Gibran says, you are the sons and daughters of Life. Have faith that Life is triumphant!

- e) While attending classes is undoubtedly important, learning extends far beyond the walls of the classroom. So, step outside your comfort zones and social circles, join clubs, the USJ Choir, participate in sports activities and immerse yourself in student politics. Reflect on how you can leave a lasting legacy on your faculty and the university as a whole. Consider becoming a volunteer in the civic and cultural initiatives of the Student Life Office, Operation 7e jour, USJ en mission and Al Mazeed, USJ's NGO. Moreover, USJ presents great opportunities for studying abroad, which I strongly encourage you to embrace. It's a chance to explore new perspectives in different environments.
- f) As you embark on your journey at USJ, I urge you to prioritize what truly matters to you, rather than solely focusing on peripheral pursuits. Think of it as filling a large glass with water, pebbles and sand. The pebbles symbolize the crucial elements: your daily studies, your friendships, your ambitious aspirations for the future, and your various allegiances. The sand represents your hobbies, moments of relaxation and escape, material desires, etc. In your university life, make it a daily practice to place the pebbles in the glass first, followed by the sand, for if you start with the sand, you'll find no space left for what is genuinely significant and vital for a rich and purposeful life!

Last but not least, keep in mind the importance of fostering strong connections with your instructors, focus on what truly makes you happy, innovate and dare to dream big for both, your personal growth and for your country!

  
**Prof. Salim Daccache s.j.,**  
Rector of Saint Joseph University of Beirut