

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

3 April 1991

To all National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

Further to the Ridván 1991 message which has already been mailed to you, the Universal House of Justice has instructed us to convey the following advice and information with regard to the forthcoming Holy Year.

You are already aware of the two major events of the Year: the commemorative gathering in the Holy Land during May 1992 to mark the 100th anniversary of the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, and the World Congress in New York during November 1992 to celebrate the centenary of the inauguration of His Covenant. As the time draws closer, you will be receiving more and more communications from the various agencies acting on behalf of the House of Justice in making preparations for these events. To prevent confusion and to enable you to respond effectively to these communications, the House of Justice suggests that, if you have not already done so, you appoint an active, efficient and reliable individual or small committee to study these communications on your behalf, keep you thoroughly informed of their contents and requirements, and assist you to coordinate your responses and to take timely and necessary actions in relation to your community.

As was pointed out in the Ridván 1990 message, the two major events being planned should not be the only commemorative activities of the Holy Year; indeed, the entire Bahá'í world at its local and national levels will engage in activities appropriate to the purposes of the Holy Year. It is important that throughout this period the attitude of the friends in all localities reflects the significance of the two occasions to be commemorated.

For the observance of the first occasion, the centenary of Bahá'u'lláh's passing, you will want to make sure that a proper devotional program takes place in each locality, at the appropriate time on 29 May, and that the best effort is made to uphold the preeminent importance, the dignity and the profoundly spiritual character of the occasion, to which non-Bahá'ís may be invited according to the discretion of the Spiritual Assemblies. To support your preparations and to unite the hearts and experience of the believers worldwide, the House of Justice will soon be sending to you the sacred readings which have been selected for the gathering at the Most Holy Shrine on that occasion. Beyond these devotional programs, the friends may plan to hold other special events—national, regional or local—for the benefit of both themselves and non-Bahá'ís, to give a more public character to the observance of this anniversary and at which informative and inspirational presentations on the life and teachings of Bahá'u'lláh can be made and discussions held.

For the second commemoration, communities everywhere, at local, regional and national levels, should plan to hold events in relation to the World Congress. Some of these may be held at the same time as the World Congress, some at other times. Whatever the decision of the Spiritual Assemblies, the events should have the same objective as the World Congress, which is to celebrate the centenary of the inauguration of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh and to proclaim its aims and unifying power. The prospect of such events should encourage the friends to study the history and meaning of the Covenant; in such study, the Continental Counselors, the Auxiliary Board members and their assistants will, no doubt, be sources of encouragement, stimulation and assistance.

Celebration in this connection does not mean merely festive activities. It is primarily a spiritual celebration that is called for: occasions for deep reflection on the historic importance, the uniqueness, the meaning and the efficacy of the Covenant established by Bahá'u'lláh, on the outstanding results of its influence in raising up a worldwide community comprising a great diversity of members, and on the triumph of its virtue as a unifying power. At the heart of such reflection will be contemplation of the peerless purpose, magnetic person, luminous character and exemplary acts of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His station as the Center and living embodiment of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh. Consciousness of the exceptional and glorious stage in humanity's spiritual evolution initiated by the Covenant, the awe such consciousness inspires and the thankful gladness it induces are of the essence of the celebration intended by the World Congress and all other events associated with this centenary. A major purpose of these events will therefore be to evoke this solemn consciousness, which is itself the wellspring of the most exquisite celebratory joy. In this spirit the commemorative activities around the world should acclaim and proclaim the Covenant as the pivotal center of unity for all humankind and illustrate its dynamic effect on the struggle, the spread, and the redemptive achievements of the Bahá'í community since the passing of the Blessed Beauty.

You will undoubtedly appreciate that publicity through the mass media should be incorporated into your plans for the Holy Year. All suitable and available creative resources—writers, artists, composers, musicians, poets, public information experts—should be called to the aid of the community, so as to imbue its plans with the most effective and attractive variety of expression. The World Center will be interested in learning of these plans as they are developed, so that news of them might be shared with others.

An important feature of the activities of the Holy Year will be the widest possible proclamation of the Name of Bahá'u'lláh; care must, of course, be exercised in all situations to uphold the dignity of this Name. As an assistance to your efforts, a statement on Bahá'u'lláh has been prepared, at the request of the House of Justice, by the Office of Public Information at the Bahá'í World Centre. We are happy to enclose a copy.

Bearing the title *Bahá'u'lláh*, the statement is intended primarily for wide distribution to the public; however, as you will readily see, it has great value as a source of study and inspiration for the friends themselves. You are free to translate and print it in dignified but moderately priced editions so that its cost to the friends will be affordable. Perhaps you will want to collaborate with other National Assemblies or with the publishing trust of any one of them in acquiring a supply of the printed material for your community. You may also wish to produce a special edition for presentation to dignitaries and prominent figures in your country; the Office of Public Information is planning to print a special edition in English for limited use and you may find such an edition appropriate to your needs. Furthermore, you will want to draw upon the statement in providing substance for various presentations on the Faith to be made during the course of the Holy Year. It is left entirely to your discretion to determine in what ways you can most effectively exploit its contents. Whatever your plans, the House of Justice expects that the statement will be published widely and abundantly for liberal distribution and use by the friends everywhere. National and Local Spiritual Assemblies and their agencies, with the encouragement and support of the Continental Counselors and their auxiliaries, will certainly see to the successful pursuit of these important objectives.

We have been asked to assure you of the ardent prayers of the House of Justice at the Holy Shrines that your endeavors to raise ever higher the standard of Bahá'u'lláh during the special year ahead may evoke His good pleasure and constant confirmations.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat

