

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

12 April 2011

To all National Spiritual Assemblies

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

We are pleased to share with you the joyful tidings of the conclusion of the restoration work on the Shrine of the Báb. This endeavour represents the most momentous among a series of projects recently carried out in the Holy Land—including the renovation of the interior and exterior of the International Archives Building; the regeneration of the Ridván Garden; the acquisition of extensive properties at Bahjí and the construction of a boulevard that provides access to the northern gate; and, adjacent to the Most Holy Shrine, the realignment of the perimeter of the northwest quadrant, presaging the completion of the full circle of surrounding gardens. All these add to the host of achievements being celebrated in these closing moments of the global enterprise which has absorbed the Bahá'í world for the last five years.

Today the “Queen of Carmel”, concealed from the gaze of the public for the larger part of the project, is unveiled and resplendent again, “crowned in glowing gold” on the Mountain of the Lord. The restoration of this majestic edifice was preceded by three years of preparations, entailing comprehensive studies to assess its condition, to analyse the impact of the environment upon it, and to determine approaches and materials for the renovation that would remain faithful to the original design as well as withstand the rigours of time. A myriad details pertaining to every element of the structure, from the gilded finial gracing the dome to the colonnade encircling the arcade, were attended to by highly skilled and dedicated craftspeople and a large band of other devoted volunteers from near and far, who lovingly laboured together with scrupulous care and with sensitivity to the sacred nature of the work before them.

Among the significant aspects of this undertaking is the structural reinforcement that the entire building has undergone to ensure greater stability and enhanced resistance to seismic forces. Over 120 rock anchors have been fixed into the mountain behind the newly fortified retaining walls shielding the Shrine. The restoration of the exterior of the superstructure called for a methodical approach to treating the stonework and all of its intricate decorative features. The ornamental iron balustrades rising above the roof of the octagon have been repaired and refinished. Precisely 11,790 gilded tiles, meticulously fashioned in scores of shapes and sizes, have been placed in position on the carefully mended and reinforced dome, which now shines in the plenitude of its splendour. The three chambers added by Shoghi Effendi to the southern side of the original mausoleum, raised with infinite pains by the Master, have been refurbished and prepared to receive pilgrims and visitors for worship. It was in the central room of these three that we gathered early this morning to offer prayers of thanksgiving, as we faced that inner sanctuary within which rests the holy dust of the Blessed Báb.

[signed: The Universal House of Justice]