

USJ Alumni in Montreal Celebrate 150 Years of Excellence and Global Solidarity



On Saturday, May 3, 2025, the USJ Alumni Association in Montreal held a gala dinner attended by Prof. Salim Daccache, SJ, Rector of the Saint Joseph University of Beirut (USJ), Prof. Christian Makary, President of the Federation of USJ Alumni Associations, Mrs. Cynthia-Maria Ghobril Andrea, Director of *Fondation* USJ, and Mr. Danny Maalouly, Director of Fundraising. The event featured comedian John Achkar as special guest, who contributed warmth and humor to the evening.

Held as part of the celebrations marking USJ's 150th anniversary, the dinner brought together more than 200 alumni and friends of the University. Distinguished attendees included Bishop Paul-Marwan Tabet, Eparch of the Maronite Eparchy of Saint Maron of Montreal; Mr. Antoine Eid, Consul General of Lebanon in Montreal; Mr. Antoine Tayar, Municipal Councillor and Acting Mayor of Mount Royal and alumnus of USJ's Institute of Political Science; Mr. Dimy Ambroise, Donor Coordinator at the Office of Advancement - Canada Province; as well as Dr. Patrick Arcache, former President of the Association.

Mr. Jean Ghannoum, President of the Association, opened the evening by highlighting the global solidarity that unites USJ alumni. He reaffirmed that the University is more than an academic institution; it is a community built on vocation, shared values, and enduring commitment. He also paid tribute to the generosity of alumni, noting that their support drives

new initiatives and creates opportunities for future generations of students. Quoting the Apostle Paul, he concluded, "Giving is a privilege."

Prof. Makary then expressed gratitude to the organizing committee for the success of the evening. He paid special tribute to John Achkar, alumnus of both the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Humanities Ramez G. Chagoury, whose stand-up performance the previous evening raised funds entirely dedicated to student scholarships. Prof. Makary highlighted USJ's milestone year, marking 150 years of academic excellence in service to Lebanon. Proud of this legacy, he praised the University's international reach, with 100,000 graduates in 103 countries, serving as ambassadors of USJ's values around the world.

Mrs. Ghobril Andrea thanked the USJ community in Canada for its steadfast commitment and extended special appreciation to Mr. Ghannoum, Dr. Arcache, the Jesuits of Canada and Myriade Canada, key partners of the University in North America. She reminded attendees that 64% of USJ students require financial aid and invited guests to take tangible action during the jubilee year, whether through donations or contributions to scholarship funds. She concluded by inviting everyone to the grand 150th anniversary dinner in Beirut on August 21, 2025.

In his speech, the Rector reaffirmed that education remains an act of resistance and hope amid Lebanon's ongoing crises. He praised alumni loyalty to the Jesuit mission and highlighted USJ's major challenges: economic collapse, youth emigration, political instability, and evolving models of higher education. Despite these difficulties, the University continues to grow through innovative, strategic projects led by a committed and determined team. He emphasized the vital role of the diaspora, whose support sustains USJ's scholarship programs and equips those who will shape Lebanon's future.

The evening continued in a joyful mood with a lively performance by John Achkar and ended with an exciting prize draw in a friendly atmosphere.

On May 2nd, during his visit to Montreal, Prof. Daccache and the accompanying delegation attended a dinner at the Maronite Eparchy of Saint Maron of Montreal, where they gathered with many alumni and friends. On this occasion, Bishop Tabet presented Prof. Daccache with the Diocesan Gold Cross in recognition of his academic and spiritual dedication and USJ's role in shaping generations of leaders in Lebanon and abroad. During the evening, Prof. Daccache reflected on the Jesuit vocation of the University: forming disciplined minds committed to the common good. He also noted with emotion that more than 60% of USJ graduates now live outside Lebanon. "The real Lebanon is outside Lebanon - it is you," he said. The evening ended with Prof. Daccache presenting Bishop Tabet with a commemorative plaque honoring USJ's 150th anniversary, sealing a moment filled with gratitude, deep emotion and enduring fidelity.

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