

Rotary Club of Beirut Renews Its Scholarship Fund for Students of the Saint Joseph University of Beirut – South Lebanon Campus, Rev. Fr. André Masse, SJ

Wednesday, 29 October 2025

Two years ago, under to the initiative of Prof. Rita Hachem Meouchy, lecturer at USJ and then President of the Rotary Club of Beirut, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the two institutions to establish a Subscription Scholarship Fund. Her successors, Mr. Mounir Douaidy and Mr. Antoine Sacy, have since upheld this spirit of solidarity by ensuring the Fund's continued support.

The renewed agreement between USJ, represented by its Rector, Prof. Salim Daccache SJ, and the Rotary Club of Beirut, represented by its current President, Mr. Antoine Sacy, was signed during a gathering at the USJ Rectorate on Wednesday, 29 October 2025. The ceremony was attended by Mrs. Cynthia Ghobril Andréa, Director of *Fondation* USJ; Prof. Dina Sidani, Director of the South Lebanon Campus - Rev. Fr. André Masse, SJ (CLS); Prof. Nadine Riachi Haddad, Secretary-General; Mr. Danny Maalouly, Fundraising Director at *Fondation* USJ; and members of the Rotary Club of Beirut Committee: Prof. Rita Meouchy, Mr. Mounir Douaidy, Mrs. Rosie Boulos, Mr. Toufic Aris, Mrs. Savia Kaldani, Mr. Nabil Abboud and Mrs. Aida Daou.

This year, the scholarships awarded through this fund will focus exclusively on students enrolled at (CLS).

Opening the ceremony, Mrs. Cynthia Ghobril Andréa expressed her sincere gratitude to the members of the Rotary Club of Beirut for their renewed generosity, steadfast support, and meaningful presence. "In these particularly challenging and uncertain times, the needs remain vast, and every act of solidarity carries tremendous significance," she said.

Mrs. Ghobril Andréa recalled that, following the financial crisis, the Rector's guidance was clear: "No student should have to leave USJ for financial reasons. That principle alone captures the very essence of our institution," she added. "Our university is built on human values, solidarity, and an unshakeable commitment to our youth."

Taking the floor, Prof. Dina Sidani expressed her pride in this renewed collaboration, which this year places a special focus on the South. She said: "I am deeply proud of this partnership with the Rotary, which so beautifully embodies the solidarity we share. My heartfelt thanks go to Mr. Antoine Sacy for his sincere concern and for the scholarships so generously offered to our students from the South. This gesture carries a message of hope and recognition for a region that greatly needs such support."

Mr. Antoine Sacy stated: "Without education, there can be no nation." He added: "Our partnership with USJ fully reflects this conviction. Education and health are at the heart of our

priorities, and this initiative, originally launched by Prof. Rita Hachem Meouchy, remains one of our most honorable and worthwhile projects – one we are proud to renew. This year, the Rotary Club of Beirut has chosen to focus its efforts on South Lebanon,” a region, he confessed, for which he holds particular affection. “This decision was inspired not only by the many requests we receive from students and parents in the region, but also by the remarkable work of Mrs. Dina Sidani, whose dedication on the ground is widely recognized. This commitment strengthens our mission while remaining true to our main purpose – supporting education, always in partnership with USJ.”

Prof. Daccache commended the Rotary Club of Beirut for its steadfast engagement and praised their decision to direct their support towards CLS this year, describing it as “entirely fitting”: “Given the current circumstances in the region, it is both timely and natural to devote particular attention to this area and to the young people who live there,” he said.

The Rector recalled that in the previous year, USJ had already awarded between 200 and 300 scholarships to students from the South. “This represents, considering our resources, a significant financial commitment, and the effort continues,” he added. “This tangible concern for the youth of our country, particularly those from the South, reflects a deep and genuine solidarity shared by both the Rotary Club of Beirut and USJ.”

He went on to emphasize that maintaining a high-quality university requires substantial resources and continuous investment, qualified staff, a large teaching body of both permanent and visiting lecturers, as well as modern facilities.

“All this inevitably entails significant costs. We must constantly strike a balance between listening to our students and their families and responding to the needs and expectations of our institution.”

Prof. Daccache added: “I am acutely aware of the struggles many families face. Every day, I receive messages from students considering giving up their studies for financial reasons. Fortunately, *Fondation* USJ is there. Thanks to its work, we have never had to turn away a single student,” he said, before concluding: “True solidarity is not a poem or a slogan – it is expressed through daily acts, through commitment and compassion, so that our young people may continue to learn, grow, and stay in their country.”

He concluded with these words: “Our university is, at its heart, a social institution. Today, we support 6,600 students with an annual budget of around 28 to 30 million dollars. This is proof that the Jesuit delegation, faithful to its mission from the very beginning, continues to serve with the same dedication and care.”

This initiative by the Rotary Club of Beirut stands as a testament to the power of meaningful action. It demonstrates that when compassion is translated into commitment, real change can

happen, especially where the needs are greatest. May solidarity continues to serve as a lasting force for our youth and their education.