



Marhaba



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Kafarmatta Dispensary XRAY Machine May 14, 2011

A number of RCBC members were present on the occasion of the handover of an X-ray machine to the dental clinic of the Kafarmatta Dispensary. The Dispensary provides medical and social services to the community in its area and is dedicated to serving people in desperate need of medical, financial and emotional support.



Mar Semaan Center Cupboards May 29, 2011

The Rotary Club of Beirut Cosmopolitan donated cupboards to the Mar Semaan Center Association to improve the furniture in the children's dormitory. The Center is located in Wadi el Karm near Baskinta and provides bed and board, education and medical care free of charge for boys and girls from three to 18 years old from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Business Meeting May 03, 2011

Upon his return from the District Conference in Egypt, President Elect Habib Saba gave a lively presentation on the Conference, showed pictures and shared stories with RCBC members.

Dinner Meeting - Guest Speaker Mr. Ricardo Karam May 10, 2011

Television Talk Show Host Mr. Ricardo Karam, our guest speaker for the evening, received a warm welcome at our dinner meeting. He gave an interesting presentation about his career and its impact on his personal life

and shared with the audience his passion for the Media that dated back to his early years.

Despite having earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Chemical Engineering and an Master of Business Administration Degree, he nurtured the passion of his early years which later became his life. He had a dream and was challenged to keep it alive. He thus determined to improve his skills by reading and learning.

Mr. Karam first practiced his media skills as a trainee in Radio Liban, after which his engaging personality and photogenic appearance helped him move across to Television. He remembered his first show, and how -- the first time he went on the air in TV -- his eyes were unable to bear the strong lighting...

He related how his enriching experience in the world of interviews had led him to meet the greatest names worldwide -- such as His Highness the Dalai Lama, Her Majesty Farah Diba Pahlavi, Her Majesty Noor Al Hussein, the Abbe Pierre, Kofi Annan, Luciano Pavarotti, Celine Dion, Charles Aznavour, Paolo Coelho, Ivo Pitanguy, Valentino, Andre Agassi and many more.

In concluding, he said he felt that his successful career had contributed to shape his personality and achieve a happy and a balanced life.





Dinner Meeting - Guest Speaker Dr. Marie Claude Najm May 24, 2011

RCBC guest speaker Dr. Marie Claude Najm, Professor at the University of St. Joseph and a legal consultant, talked about “The Hold of the Confessional (or Sectarian) Factor on our Individual Rights.”

She presented a number of case examples to illustrate her topic.

First Case Example: A situation where the confessional factor was able to neutralize the very capacity of the State to legislate

This is the example of the draft law on optional civil marriage, proposed in 1998 by President Hrawi. Despite the opposition of then-Premier the late Rafic Hariri, the draft law was approved by the Council of Ministers in March 1998.

However, it immediately faced fierce opposition from the religious authorities.

Had the draft law been voted into law by the Parliament -- which was by no means guaranteed -- the religious authorities would have been able to petition the Constitutional Council to abolish said law on the basis that it violated the Constitution. However, instead of allowing the issue to follow constitutional due process, they urged the Government to “withdraw the draft law immediately with no further discussion.” Result: instead of sending the draft law to the Parliament, as called for in the Constitution, the Government buried it in its drawers.

This set-back to the Lebanese State is regrettable, for at least two reasons:

1°- First, because it conveys a false impression of the nature of the power of the religious authorities in Lebanon. The religious communities are not the civil power in Lebanon, and the Lebanese State is not a theocratic State. Civil authority belongs only to the State; it is up to the State to recognize the powers of religious communities; and it is up to the State to control, to restrict or even to abolish them.

2°- The second reason relates to the content of the draft law itself.

Setting up a civil personal status in Lebanon is a need if we want our law to be in accord with the fundamental rights of the individual (freedom of conscience, equal rights and obligations for all citizens...) that the Lebanese State has undertaken to guarantee -- both in its Constitution and in the international treaties it has ratified..

At the present time, religious laws apply exclusively in family law, because there is no Lebanese civil status. And some of these religious laws, as well as some of the proceedings before religious courts, are contrary to fundamental rights that the Lebanese State has vowed to respect.

For example:

a) Obstacles to marriages between people of different religions or confessions. In forbidding or restricting mixed marriages, these rules violate the freedom of conscience (which is guaranteed in our Constitution); in Lebanon, one must convert to be able to get married to someone from another religion.

b) Discrimination based on gender, religion, and filiation. These rules violate the principle of equality before the law, which is guaranteed by our Constitution.





c) Violations of the right to a fair trial (guaranteed by the 1966 Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and ratified by Lebanon); as well as the lack of transparency and neutrality that characterizes appearances before ecclesiastical courts, mainly in marriage annulment cases...

By failing to establish a civil personal status, the Lebanese State endorses fully both the content and the exclusivity of religious laws, and thereby supports the violation of rights it has engaged to guarantee.

II. Second Case Example: A situation where the confessional factor was able to neutralize the content of State legislation

In April 2010, the Lebanese Ministers of Justice and The Interior submitted to the government a “draft law on protecting women against domestic violence.” This draft law penalizes domestic violence in all its forms, including moral, economic and psychological violence. According to this draft law, a woman who is subjected to domestic violence can obtain -- without having to pay court fees -- “a protection order” in order to remove her husband from their home in case her life or the life of one of her children is in danger.

Finally and most importantly, article 26 of the draft law considers “all texts that are contrary to the provisions of this law as abolished.” After several debates and objections, the government finally adopted the draft law, but only after amending article 26. This amendment – the aim of which is to ensure the primacy of religious laws and the jurisdiction of religious courts – has almost voided the draft law of its content.

Here again, the State-legislator has suffered a set back. The subject matter of the law here does not fall within the field of jurisdiction of religious authorities. It falls within criminal law. The religious factor was able to neutralize the content of a criminal law, that is to say a field reserved to the State and only to the State.

She concluded by saying “Although the examples I have cited constitute single cases or events, I think all the signs are important and related because they all rooted in the same cause and and they all seek the same result: a setback to the State and an advance of sectarianism under the cover – each and every time – of protecting cultural rights and religious pluralism.”

Business Meeting - Guest Speaker Dr. Cynthia Myntti May 31, 2011

Dr. Cynthia Myntti, Professor at the American University of Beirut (AUB), introduced our members the AUB University for Seniors.

The University for Seniors, established in 2008, is a new life-long learning initiative at AUB. It gives older people, who want to remain intellectually and socially engaged and to continue to contribute actively to their community, the opportunity to share their wisdom and passion, and to learn things they have always wanted to learn, in a friendly academic environment



The principles of The University for Seniors are:

Community building: Joining the University for Seniors means becoming a member of a group, run by the members themselves.

Peer learning: Members learn from one another rather than from a paid professional instructor. Study group leaders and lecturers are all volunteers.

Intergenerational connections: Members connect to the regular AUB student body through multiple academic and extra-curricular activities.

It aims at:

- Institutionalizing – The AUB Continuing Education Center
- Creating a membership organization
- Developing a wider range of activities
- Expanding the profile of participants
- Raising funds

The University for Seniors is a unique community-building initiative for learning and sharing life experiences.

Trip to Chateau Kefraya

May 08, 2011



Twinning with Rotary Club Wasserburg

May 10, 2011

Past President (PP) Tony Asfour, representing RCBC travelled to Wasserburg in Bavaria, Germany, Rotary District (RD) 1840 to present the Sisterhood (Twinning) agreement to President Peter Rink, of Rotary Club Wasserburg (RCW). During a special dinner held on May 10, 2011, in Hotel Fletzinger, the meeting venue of RCW, the ceremony was attended by the Incoming District Governor (IDG) Hans Georg Fick (RD 1840, Germany) and over 30 members of the RCW and their spouses.

After a welcome speech by President Peter Rink, PP Tony Asfour emphasized the history of successful cooperation between the two clubs over the past few years resulting in the completion of a number of projects for The Schneller School in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon.

Furthermore, it was pointed out that both IG Hans Georg Fick and PP Tony Asfour were both the Group Study Exchange (GSE) Chairmen from D 1840 and D 2450 respectively that had paired in a GSE program -- resulting in the hosting by Rotary Clubs in Lebanon of a

team from Germany during the month of May 2010. IDG Hans Georg Fick made a short speech stressing the importance of close ties between Rotary clubs in order to achieve the objectives of Rotary.

The twinning agreement and club banners were exchanged, between P Peter and PP Tony followed by a toast for the future success of both clubs.

Members of RC Wasserburg are planning a trip to Lebanon in October 2011, to join RC Beirut Cosmopolitan during the handover ceremony of the Schneller solar water heating project that was approved a few months ago by the Rotary Foundation. Such exchanges of visits will no doubt enhance the feeling of fellowship between club members.



Banner Exchange with PP Rev. Glyn Jones from RC of Halstead on May 17, 2011

Rotary Ambassadorial Scholars Anna Wadsworth and Noorjahan Rahman visiting RCBC on May 31, 2011



Members' Happy Moments ☺

Happy Birthday to PP Edouard Rassie (May 02), RT Mounir Jabr (May 22) and PP Tony Asfour (May 28).

RCBC wishes you a wonderful year of health, prosperity and happiness.