

A Welcome Speech to Celebrate Jawdat Haydar's Poetry at The Holy Spirit University of Kaslik

*By Father Karam Rizk
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On behalf of the Rector Father Hadi Mahfouz and the Faculty of Letters, allow me to welcome you to the 4th anniversary of the passing of the poet Jawdat Haydar, who is also known as “Shakespeare” or even the “Prince” of the Arab World.

Born in Baalbeck in 1905, under the Ottoman rule, Jawdat Haydar grew up in a family of intellectuals, which led him to pursue his studies in France and later in the United States, before returning to his home country in 1928. Although he worked in industrial and agricultural fields, that did not impede his thirst for politics and literature.

The poet expresses his outlooks towards humanity through his written works, mainly poetry. His poems were written in English which allowed him to take his place among his Lebanese literary contemporaries such as Gebran Khalil Gebran and predecessors such as Amin Rihany and Mikhail Naimy. It wasn't until the death of his wife in 1982 that the poet expressed himself in his mother tongue.

Through his works, Jawdat Haydar emerges as a man who is aware of his humanity and who vows that his most desired wish is to see human beings attain absolute happiness. His poetry, representative of our daily life, tends to combine the orient and the occident, to surpass any clashes that might be caused by social and cultural differences and to reconcile these two worlds in hope of achieving absolute human harmony. By using the English language, the poet is not rebelling against his roots but using English as a tool to convey the concept of transculturation.

Recognized time and again, the poet received the papal medallion, presented to him by Jean-Paul II.

We are gathered here not to celebrate the anniversary of the passing of a poet in 2006 but mainly to celebrate poetry that enriches our literature and glorifies our Lebanon.

Finally and before I leave the stage, I would like to thank the poet's family represented by the poet's daughter Madam Shahina Haydar Ouseiran, the friends of Jawdat Haydar, the President of the Educational Center for Research and Development, Professor Leyla Maliha Fayyad, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences - AUB, Professor Patrick McGreevy, the Dean of the Faculty of Languages and Translation at Pharos University – Egypt, Professor Sahar Hamouda, the Head of the English Language and Literature Department at USEK, Dr Rosie Ghannage, the artist and one of our beloved students, Ms. Abeer Nehmeh, and all those who helped to make this occasion memorable.

I thank you all for joining us to celebrate the poetry of Jawdat Haydar!