



Embassy of Lebanon
Washington, D.C.

REMARKS BY THE AMBASSADOR OF LEBANON
ANTOINE CHEDID
AT THE KAHLIL GIBRAN REDEDICATION CEREMONY

Thursday, May 05, 2011

Secretary LaHood,

Secretary Salazar,

Excellencies,

Dear Friends,

It is indeed an auspicious occasion for us to assemble here in the heart of this great and beautiful capital of the United States of America, Washington DC to celebrate a meaningful event: "The Rededication of the Kahlil Gibran Memorial".

I would like first to thank the Kahlil Gibran Memorial Foundation, The Southern Federation of Syrian Lebanese Clubs, The National Park Service, the Arab American Institute Foundation and my valuable staff at the Embassy of Lebanon for the good efforts they exerted to restore this memorial to its former grandeur.

Twenty years ago, President George H.W.Bush personally dedicated this memorial to the public. I accompanied the preparation in the mid 80's as I was then a junior diplomat at our Embassy here and I still remember very well the efforts of Sheryl Ameen. Time lies its burdens on human beings and on material things and unfortunately affected this beautiful memorial which fell into disrepair. Now it is bright and welcoming again.

As the Ambassador of Lebanon, the native country of Gibran, I am extremely proud and grateful to all of you American officials specially Secretary LaHood and Secretary Salazar and Park Officials for your tremendous contribution to bring back Gibran's Memorial to life again.

No one who is aware of the rich literary and spiritual legacy of the Lebanese - American poet, Kahlil Gibran can ignore his contribution to the life of the American nation. Nor can one ignore the revolutionary influences on Lebanon and the Arab world this poet and writer has exerted. Gibran was an early Ambassador of the spirit of Lebanon. He said *"I come to be for all and in all. That which alone I do today shall be proclaimed before the people in days to come. And what I now say / tomorrow will say with many"*.

One hundred twenty eight years later these prophetic words have been realized. Kahlil Gibran's work has so far been translated into some forty languages and his most celebrated book, "The Prophet" has never gone out of print since its publication in 1923.

Here in America, Gibran has received an important confirmation by creating this Memorial Garden in his honor in the heart of Washington DC, as a result of a Bill passed then by Congress followed by a special Commemorative Ceremony in May 1991 which was attended by the President of the United States.

If we have in fact entered the global age, then Gibran is the global poet "par excellence". He was ahead of his time with a poetic vision through which he labored tirelessly to warn us of the dangers of all forms of divisiveness. To possess such vision and espouse such a belief in the unity of the human family was a gift of his homeland Lebanon / Lebanon / the crossroads of the earliest civilizations known to man is a land that is more than a geographical location, rather, Lebanon is a land that has come to represent unity in diversity. The Lebanese homeland has always remained alive in Kahlil Gibran's heart while his love for his adopted country the Great United States of America allowed him to build an edifice of glory and prove his love to the whole world.

In Gibran's words:

"I am kindled when I remember the place of my birth. I love the place of my birth with some of the love of my land. I love my country with a little of my love for the world, my homeland."

Kahlil Gibran was much influenced by the distinctive features of his homeland Lebanon and its unique history. America sharpened his genius and opened for him new intellectual and spiritual horizons. But Gibran was above all a true citizen of the world.

In conclusion, I would like again in the name of Lebanon, to thank all who contributed to this rededication of this memorial which personifies one important dimension of the multi-dimensional relation between the United States of America and Lebanon.

Thank you all and God bless you.