

## WELLNESS AND MENTAL HEALTH WEEK

### Flourish Your Wellbeing

Speech of Fr. Michel Jalakh,  
Rector of Antonine University

Monday, 28 March 2022

Honorable Speakers and Guests,

Dear students and faculty,

Dear all,

I am glad to welcome you at Antonine University to celebrate together the second edition of our “Wellness and Mental Health Week”.

While contemplating what to say in this opening speech, it came to my mind that “Are you doing well?” might be the most frequently asked question around the globe. But then, I immediately asked myself if we are still allowed to ask such a question in Lebanon after what we have witnessed during the past few years. Add to that the difficulties we are all experiencing in imagining a comprehensive and sustainable solution for the multifaceted, highly complex, and reason-defying chaos we are living in.

جميعنا نبدأ أحاديثنا بالسؤال الأسهل، والأصعب في آن، "كيفك؟ - انشالله منيح!". ومع ذلك، كلمة "منيح" أصبحت أكثر تعقيداً وأصعب تحقيقاً في أيامنا. أمّا في الجامعة الأنطونية، فهذا السؤال ليس مجرد سؤال للمجاملة، لأنّ "التنمية المتكاملة" و"الراحة المستدامة" هما من صلب رسالة الجامعة ويعنيان جميع المسؤولين فيها، وليست حكراً على "نيابة الرئاسة للتنمية البشرية المتكاملة" التي نظّمت هذا الأسبوع المتميّز مشكورة.

*(Arabic) We all start our conversations and emails by the obvious, yet tricky question: How are you? I hope you are doing well. However, “well” is becoming more complex and harder to achieve every day. At Antonine University this question is not a rhetorical one, because the “integral human development” and the “sustainable wellbeing of the community” are at the core of our mission and vision, not only those*

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of the “Vice rectorate for Integral Human Development” who is organizing this remarkable event.

We would not make such efforts and mobilize such resources if wellbeing was just a passive state you achieve once. Wellbeing is nowadays defined as an active process through which people become aware of, and make choices towards, a more successful existence.

This definition allows a better understanding of wellness. It is a conscious, self-directed, and continuous process for achieving full potentials as individuals. But, it cannot be separated from the *community* wellbeing. At Antonine University, we believe in integral human development, we believe blessings are made to be shared, and we believe that an individual cannot flourish alone. Hence, we work on making our university an oasis of wellbeing where students, faculty, and employees experience what it is like to live in harmony and mutual care and respect, and to have access to all the resources and support each and everyone needs to thrive.

Again, this holistic perspective is at the core of our mission. We want to create a “sustainable wellbeing” to our university community and to the broader one.

This should not hide the realities though. We live in a country where the minimalistic definition of wellness, I mean the absence of illness, infirmity or life-threatening dangers is still difficult to ensure. Our realistic, yet very ambitious objective, is therefore to teach our students the art of resilience, not only as a passive or evasive way of saving one’s interests, but as the art of preserving one’s lucidity and strength to be able to help others.

During this week, international and local experts will tackle the various aspects of wellbeing ranging from health to spirituality, and encompassing occupational wellbeing, cultural wellbeing, emotional and cognitive wellbeing, etc.

We should not hide the fact that we are invited to be the tools of God who came for the purpose that “[we all] may have life and have it to the full” (John 10: 10).

“Having life to the full”: this is the ultimate definition of wellbeing for the us. Unsurprisingly, it also implies the ultimate definition of **Love!**

Thank you!