

Homily of the Christmas Mass – December 23, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Gospel: Luke 2:1–14

**Addressed by the President, Rev. Father Salim Daccache, S.J.,
to the Alumni of Saint Joseph University of Beirut,
in the presence of Mr. Abbas Halabi, Minister and President of the Federation of Alumni
Associations**

Dear Alumni of Saint Joseph University of Beirut,
Mr. Minister Abbas Halabi, President of the Federation of Alumni Associations,
Dear colleagues, dear friends,

On this feast of Christmas, the Church proclaims a message that never grows old: *“Today a Savior is born to you.”* And this *“today”* is decisive. Christmas is not merely a memory, a tradition, or an emotion; Christmas is a presence. God enters our history and chooses to encounter humanity not through power, but through fragility.

In the Gospel, everything begins with a census and a forced journey. Joseph and Mary set out. In Bethlehem, there is no room. Jesus is born in poverty, far from centers of power. And yet, it is precisely there that the glory of God is revealed: in closeness, in humility, in tenderness offered to all.

Dear Alumni, this mystery sheds light on your vocation today. Christmas, by gathering you with your University, is not simply a moment of remembrance; it is a call. In the Christmas Gospel, the first ones called are the shepherds watchers of the night, simple men, yet attentive to the voice of God. Your role is similar to theirs: to watch, to set out, and to bear witness. For you, this mission unfolds in three essential areas.

1) Always Proclaim Dialogue: Strengthening Relationships and Opening Paths to Truth

The angels say to the shepherds: *“Do not be afraid.”* Fear is the enemy of dialogue: it causes withdrawal, hardens hearts, and turns others into adversaries.

Christmas reveals a God who comes not to dominate, but to encounter. That is why dialogue is not a weakness; it is a strength.

Dialogue strengthens relationships because it rebuilds trust. It opens paths to truth because it rejects caricature, falsehood, and easy labeling.

Dear Alumni, in your professional, social, and cultural environments, you have the capacity to be bridge-builders—between generations, between communities, between different sensibilities. I invite you to be artisans of a firm and respectful dialogue: a dialogue that enlightens, defends human dignity, and seeks truth without violence.

2) Working for a “Lebanon of Citizens” Beyond Confessionalism and Sectarianism

Christmas proclaims a decisive truth: God becomes human for all. He reminds us that the human person is greater than any affiliation, and that citizenship must be stronger than sectarian loyalties.

We know the devastation caused by confessionalism and sectarianism: divisions, injustices, moral exhaustion, and resignation. But Christmas tells us that it is possible to begin again by choosing a different path: a Lebanon of citizens.

A Lebanon where the law protects without favoritism.
A Lebanon where institutions serve rather than exploit.
A Lebanon where merit, competence, and integrity prevail over clientelism.

Mr. Minister Abbas Halabi, your presence among us reminds us that this vision requires upright consciences and assumed responsibilities. Dear Alumni, a Lebanon of citizens will not be built through slogans, but through a lived culture—reflected in the way we work, decide, manage, recruit, vote, reject what is unacceptable, and promote what is just.

3) Being Strong and Conscious Partners of USJ and Its Solidarity Programs

After Bethlehem, the shepherds do not keep their joy to themselves; they share it. In the same way, Christmas does not end with emotion—it becomes mission.

Your bond with USJ is one of gratitude, but also of responsibility.

Saint Joseph University is called to form not only competent women and men, but above all upright consciences, and to maintain an educational and social presence in service of the country. In the current context, USJ stands firm like a sentinel thanks to a community of professors, staff, students, and alumni.

To be strong partners means, concretely, to support the University's mission, defend its project of excellence and service, and strengthen its solidarity programs so that deserving students are not excluded, distress does not prevail, and the future remains possible. Your strength is not limited to material support: it is also expressed through your networks, expertise, mentorship, opportunities (internships and employment), your presence, and your commitment to speaking what is right.

The Alumni, Like the Shepherds: Watching, Setting Out, Bearing Witness

Allow me to summarize everything in one sentence: like the shepherds, you watch, you walk, and you bear witness.

You watch over values, over memory, over ethical responsibility, and over an institution that serves the nation.

You set out by moving beyond nostalgia toward responsibility, by bringing people together rather than dividing them, by reconciling rather than inflaming.

You bear witness, through your choices and commitments, that a more just Lebanon is possible, and that solidarity is not merely a word, but a duty.

Conclusion: "Glory to God... and Peace on Earth"

The angels proclaim peace. But peace is not magical; it is the fruit of dialogue, justice, genuine citizenship, and lived solidarity.

This Christmas, let us ask the Lord for three graces for the Alumni of USJ:

- the grace of courageous dialogue that strengthens relationships and opens paths to truth;
- the grace of commitment to a Lebanon of citizens, beyond confessionalism and sectarianism;
- the grace to be strong, faithful, and conscious partners of Saint Joseph University and its solidarity programs.

May the Child of Bethlehem, Prince of Peace,
be born in our country,
be born in our institutions,
be born in our University, and above all be born in our hearts,
so that together we may become bearers of light.

Amen.