

Mass and prayer dedicated to Basil Fuleihan's Recovery  
*Remarks by Mohamad Chatah, on behalf of Basil's friends*

St Matthew's Cathedral Washington DC

Thursday February 24th, 2005

It is often said, where is love, there is also pain. Today we come together in great pain and deep sadness, but we also come with a lot of love. We come with the pain of knowing that Basil, a special and dear friend to all of us here, today lies in silence on a hospital bed outside Paris fighting for his life. It is the pain of simply imagining the anguish and sadness that his wife Yasma, sitting by his bedside, and the rest of his family, his mother and his brother Ramzi, must all be going through at this very moment. It is pain and sadness that is shared by thousands others – indeed by a whole nation – whose heart has gone out for Basil and continues to pray for him since that fateful Monday afternoon of February 14. A nation that has also been in deep mourning for the late Prime Minister Hariri and more than a dozen others who fell on that day.

There is pain yes. But there is also a lot of love here today. In fact, there's always been a lot of love around Basil.

Even his return to his home country 12 years ago to be part of Lebanon's rebirth was not only an act of faith but it was also an act of devotion. It was modest, unpretentious, and largely unspoken commitment and love for his country that drove him there.

When he left Washington DC 12 years ago he left here many friends that loved him. But he didn't really leave any of you. Neither have you left him. Your presence here on this snowy afternoon says it all.

If you want to really know about Basil's love, you should ask his wife Yasma. As many of you know, Yasma and his two little children had been living in Switzerland since last fall, because he feared for their safety as he told his friends. He would go and visit them every time he could. In fact he had returned to Beirut from Switzerland just a day before that awful Monday. He returned because of what he considered to be important parliamentary duties, despite the fact that the following day, February 14, was a very special day.

Monday morning, while inside the parliament building debating the electoral law, he kept calling his office to make sure that the Valentine Day flowers he had requested would be delivered to his wife.

Basil, we pray that one day you'll be able to give Yasma Valentine's Day flowers again.

They say you can judge people by their enemies, as well as by their friends. How very true. The forces of darkness that struck Rafic Hariri and Basil Fuleihan tell a lot about the two men. It is not a coincidence that the two were sitting next to each other in the car on that awful day. They did that often. The friendship, closeness, and trust that Rafic Hariri and Basil Fuleihan had in each other tell a lot – a lot of good things – about the two men.

Today, as Basil lies in silence, and his heart continues to pound under his charred skin, we pray for him and for his family, as we pray for the late Prime Minister Hariri and others who fell on that day. We also tell Basil that in their silence their voice is now louder than ever. A whole nation is now speaking out. A whole nation is speaking for them. Speaking the truth. And speaking the truth sets the spirit free. For twelve years Basil and Rafic Hariri were helping build a country, now in their silence, they are helping build a nation.

Basil, our hearts go out to you. God bless you.