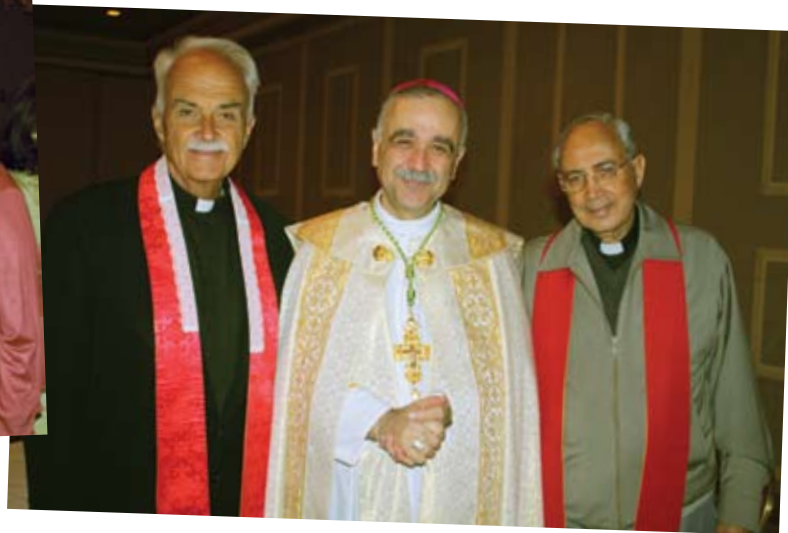


Fr. Denis Como, SJ, with Bishop Bawai Soro and Fr. Clarence Burby, SJ



Wathiq Hindo, Waiel Hindo, Fr. Regan, Grace Regan



Hope, Courage & Friendship

Alumni/ae gather for the 16th Reunion of Baghdad College and Al Hikma University

At the 16th Reunion of Baghdad College and Al Hikma University on July 16–19, 2009, in Detroit, Michigan, alumni/ae remembered stories, sang songs, danced and expressed their gratitude to the Jesuit Fathers who had educated them — for some over 50 years ago. Alumni/ae, families and friends numbering over 400 joined Jesuits, many of whom served in Iraq, to share news, renew friendships and offer support and care to one another.

“The Jesuit fathers were like midwives to us. They took us in as children, educated us and gave us back as the intelligentsia of Iraqi society. In the last election for prime minister, many of the candidates were students of the Jesuits,” said one attendee.

Jesuits founded Baghdad College in 1932 as a preparatory high school and opened Al Hikma University in 1956 as a university with programs in engineering, business and liberal arts. Over 140 Jesuits from the New England Province administered the two schools for 37 years until their expulsion in 1968 and 1969.

Sahd Jaz, a 1990 graduate, mentioned that even though Jesuits are no longer teaching at Baghdad College, their influence is still present in the many materials the Jesuits developed that remain in the curriculum.

Attendees began arriving on Thursday. On Friday, Mass was celebrated and the evening brought a welcome reception and dinner, where the strong bonds of friendship and

gratitude were renewed among the alumni/ae and the Jesuits.

On Saturday morning and afternoon attendees had an extended “business meeting” that reconfirmed the overwhelming desire by almost all present to continue the Reunions as they have been having them.

Basil Bakal made a compelling presentation about the Adopt a Refugee Family Program. Basil is passionate about the need to help others. “It is never about us or the small contribution that each one of us makes,” he says, “but it is about giving back and sharing the Lord’s blessing and love.”

The Saturday Reunion Mass was celebrated by Bishop Bawai Soro, of the Chaldean Catholic Church, San Diego, with Deacon Thamer Abouna, from Santa Barbara Church in Las Vegas. They were assisted by Fr. Denis Como, SJ, returning from Iraq, and Fr. Clarence Burby, SJ, currently serving in Jordan.

At the Saturday banquet, the Pylon Band of Toronto provided both Middle East and Western entertainment.

Pylon had also performed at the 2004 reunion held in Boston.

Fr. Thomas Regan, SJ, then Provincial, and Fr. Michael Linden, SJ, provincial assistant for international, social and pastoral ministries, celebrated the closing liturgy, and offered a heartfelt thank you to the attendees with a special acknowledgment to Ramzi Hermiz and his family for their tireless efforts in making the 2009 reunion such a success.



Ramzi Hermiz introduces Dr. Edmond Nouri, the eldest alumni in attendance, who was celebrating his 50th class reunion.



Pictured above are: Jesuit Fathers John Donohue, Charlie Dunn, Al Hicks along with Michael Linden.



Many alumni/ae brought their families. Will Battah, grandson of Emmanuel Battah ('48), was one of the youngest attendees.

Our Jesuits still hope for a return to Iraq, and several of the men of New England have been able to work and visit. Fr. Como has just concluded an assignment with the Chaldean Seminary at Erbil. Fr. Hicks and Fr. Linden visit to keep our relationships active and to monitor the progress of our court proceedings. Fr. Bonian was able to undertake several pieces of work. As the nation de-militarizes and life becomes more normal, we Jesuits hope to be part of the normal reality of Iraq also. We have no crystal ball, to be sure, but we all know that the Jesuits love the Church and will want to make a distinctive contribution to Iraqi society and culture. Our friends in Iraq, especially Wathiq Hindo, deeply inspire us Jesuits in the effort to return, and I hope you all can be in solidarity with them on our behalf.

~ Excerpted from Fr. Regan's Letter to the Alumni/ae

