

Dearly Beloved in Christ,

Greetings in the precious name of our Lord!

By the grace of God, my family and I am completing our first year of service in the U.S in a new surrounding, culture, rules and regulations, and a new community, very different from Kerala.

The word of God has a vital role in our spiritual nurturing. Ps: 84:5 says blessed is the man whose strength is in God whose heart is set on pilgrimage. In the Bible, the life of faith is often described as a walk (Ps: 17:1, 84:11, Mich: 6:8, Rom: 8:1). Our Christian pilgrimage involves plodding, which means to walk slowly and perseveringly, a pace that sometimes feels unspiritual and unproductive. Abraham and Sarah trusted in God's promises even though they had to wait for several years for those promises to be fulfilled (Heb: 11:8-12). Another example of plodding through life is that of William Carey, a cobbler who became a scholar linguistic and the father of modern missions. He said in his old age "should anyone think it is worth his while to write my life and if he gives me credit for being a plodder, he will describe me justly. Anything beyond this will be too much". I can plod, to this I owe everything. With this being said, be a purposeful plodder. Perform your mission with Christ's help from day to day by keeping at your tasks. Be encouraged by his presence. Faithfulness is all he asks.

Tourist books focus on the splendor of the tourist resorts. For them, the destination is important; it does not matter how one gets there. There are many people who say that all religions lead to the mountain top. But Christianity emphasizes that the journey is as important as the destination. Christ did not say that he is the destination, but he did say "I am the way to the Father" (John 14:6). In the early days of Christianity, Christians were described as the "people of the way".

It is true that this way can be hazardous and dangerous, and yet the journey is worth the trouble when we journey with God. This is what the Psalmist means when he says "Blessed is the man whose strength is in God, whose heart is set on pilgrimage". The journey will be through the 'valley of Baea, valley of tears and the via Dolorosa (way of sorrow). Very often we hear even believers sighing for the end of the journey and yearning for the destination as early as possible. As the prophet Elijah said "it is enough now, o Lord, take away my life" (1 Kings 19:4). But the destination is meant for those who ran the full length of this race, who fought the fight well and who kept their faith (2 Tim: 4:7-8). A young school girl in Africa gave her teacher a beautiful sea shell which she found on a distant island. The teacher was deeply touched by this rare gift and the long walk she made to get it. The teacher told the girl that she did not have to take all this trouble; the girl replied "the journey is part of the gift".

Thus our Christian walk on this earth is part of our pilgrimage to our eternal home.

When we walk with God, God is walking with us. May the Lord Almighty help us to walk with him in our pilgrimage to the eternal home. Amen.

With Warm Regards,

Yours in Christ's Ministry,

Jose Abraham Achen