

January 23, 2020 - Pastoral Letter

Dear Saints in Christ,

I qualify for Social Security and it's killing me! Like every ol' buck my age, I wonder, *How did this happen? How did a young guy like me rack up so many years?*

And yet, in retrospect, I should have seen it coming.

Last evening a friend called at about 8:30 and asked, "Did I wake you?" As we talked, our conversation carried the familiar hint of Ben Gay. We talked about other people's operations and argued over retirement plans. I told him about the high fiber in my diet. He claimed his joints could predict the weather more accurately than the Weather Channel.

But I refuse to see aging as a problem. In fact, I celebrate my age; it's made me a wealthy man. Not because of the silver in my hair or the gold in my teeth, but because of the many adventurous miles on my soul's odometer. And I'm determined to keep cruising as long as there's tread on the tires.

Is there anything more natural than aging? I, for one, refuse to give in to the stereotypical old-age syndrome. And I'm buoyed by others who feel the same. Consider "old folks," such as:

- Grandma Moses who, at 76, began her iconic career in painting ...
- Harland Sanders who, at 65, perfected those 11 herbs and spices ...
- Golda Meir who, at 71, became prime minister of Israel ...
- Laura Ingalls Wilder who, at 65, cranked out her first novel, *Little House on the Prairie* ...
- Irene Wells Pennington who, in her 90s, took control of the family business and turned a \$600 million oil company into some serious money ...
- Melchora Aquino who, at 84, led the Philippines' fight for independence from Spain ...
- Mahatma Gandhi who, at 78, became the preeminent leader in freeing India from British rule ...
- Oscar Swahn who, at 64, won an Olympic gold medal, and 8 years later won an Olympic silver medal ...

- And Caleb who said, "Here I am today, eighty-five years old! I am just as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go to battle as I was then. Now give me this hill country ...!"

There's plenty of fight left in many of us.

And then there was Abraham. When we first meet the patriarch, the old boy is 75 years old and settling into the quiet life of a retirement village in Ur of the Chaldeans. Although he and Sarah had no children, they had even less hopes of birthing one while in "the home." But they did have a large extended family and lots of possessions. They had retired well. Therefore, in this last chapter of their lives, the twilight years, they would recline and reminisce about a full and adventurous life.

Life expectancies had already decreased dramatically by this point (the longevity of Methuselah and Noah was ancient history to Abraham). And whereas Noah did most of his ark building when he was in his 500s, Abraham had reached his peak age. This septuagenarian knew his best days had passed.

But then, he got a call.

God was on the line telling Abraham to pack up the family, move all their belongings lock, stock, and barrel to an unknown place called Canaan.

And Abraham did it—without reason, without promise, without a map, and without question. He said goodbye to his comfy confines to relocate in an unknown world.

Nearly 2,000 miles later, this obedient traveler arrived in his new home. And only then did God offer His promise to give Abraham a son and all this new land as an inheritance to his descendants.

For Abraham, the best that life had to offer came in his later years. New promises ... a new name ... a new family—these were all gifts given to accompany his senior status.

No wonder this patriarch is prominently listed in the Bible's Hall of Faith! But it wasn't age that gained him entrance. Rather, it was his willingness to believe the impossible and obey the unthinkable despite his age. "By faith,

Abraham, when he was called, obeyed ... and he went out, not knowing where he was going."

Ministry is like a reservoir. The longer you serve, the wider and deeper that reservoir becomes. And the surest way to fill that reservoir is to age. There's something about a long, rich life that can't be acquired without living it. As a very wise man once said, "A gray head is a crown of glory."

Thanks, Solomon. I needed that!

Blessings,

Pastor Lucero