

Dear Patria Family

On Saturday, 13th September, 2008 at 0730 a.m. I boarded an SAA flight from Harare Airport, Zimbabwe. I had a window seat and so was able to see my beloved homeland slip away below me, and I cried the whole way until we landed at Oliver Tambo Airport, Johannesburg. I was alone and had not been able to strike up a conversation with the person sitting next to me on the plane. I had a 5-hour wait in Johannesburg before boarding a Kalula plane to bring me to George Airport where my eldest son, Peter-John, his wife, Lindie, and my 5-month old granddaughter, Jesika, were waiting to welcome me. I had dressed warmly, expecting cold weather in CAW, but there was a berg wind and the temperature was 35! It was also Lindie's brother Johan's wedding day, and although I wanted to share the day with him and his new wife, Christine, I was too tired and very emotional to be of any good company to anyone. So, we came to No 15 Werda Street, Blanco and Peter said "Welcome to your new home, Mum".

After much deliberation and careful thought I had decided, at long last, to leave Zimbabwe and to move to South Africa. The last 7 years in Zim were very, very difficult indeed: the family farm and home of 53 years was "taken" from us; my mother had to move into Harare at the age of 81; my brother and his family were forced to separate for a while - he moving to Zambia to earn FOREX in order to support his wife and 3 children (including a quadraplegic daughter) in England; I gave up a very secure, well-paid job with accommodation in order to share a home and take care of my mother; a total collapse in the economy; shortages of food, fuel and medical supplies; constant prolonged power, water and telephone cuts; a massive unemployment problem which gave rise to an escalation in crime; and more and more of my family and friends leaving the country. All very sad, all very difficult but it was still my country of birth and I loved it and the people with a deep passion.

My mother passed away on the 10th May, 2007 at the age of 87; I was forced to have two beloved dogs put to sleep because, when I could find food for them, I had to pay more for it than I could afford to pay the two domestic staff I had working for me!

I moved into a new home on my own, was blessed with an incredibly well-paid job (in US\$'s), had a beautiful garden and some friends close by and we had lots of fun going out into the bush over weekends, camping, fishing, hiking and exploring. Then, sometime in June, 2008 the area in which I lived was cut off from Municipal water supply and we were lucky if we got electricity for more than 24 hours a week and my landline hardly ever worked, so no emailing let alone making local calls. The man for whom I was working had his mining business "taken" from him and so I was out of a job, with little chance of finding other good employment. And so I decided it was time to move.

At the end of about 3 months here in George, I was so filled with homesickness, longing for my friends and things familiar, the Anglican church I belonged to and much more. Also, two conditions attached to my Temporary Resident Permit are that "You live with your son and you are not allowed to work until you get Permanent Resident status". Not so easy for one as independent as I was. I actually cried out to Peter and said "I just don't know what I'm doing here; I'm so unhappy I think I'll go back to Zim". He said "That's okay, Mum. You can just go back - and die in Zimbabwe, or you can find out what God's purpose is for your life and you can live". Well, at the time I thought that was very, very harsh and unkind of him - but over the course of the next few days, I found that he had actually given me much food for thought. But I struggled so much to find out what God's purpose was for me. I was very skeptical whenever I heard anyone saying "I've had a word from God..... The Holy Spirit spoke to me..... This or that scripture from the Bible tells me....." and so on.

And, of course, because I relied on Pete and Lindie for transport I had to go with them to Patria if I wanted to go to church. Well, here was another "shock" for me - me, in a charismatic, "happy-clapper" church with a band, lights, loud music, people praying in tongues, people lifting their hands up in worship and singing songs of praise and worship instead of the good old-fashioned hymns I had grown up with and was used to! But I persevered and I soon found that "something" was moving inside of me and I was crying a lot during the services at Patria. Now I know that Lindie understood what was happening and without words, but just gentle hugs and touches she helped me into a comfort zone at Patria.

In October, 2008 I enrolled for the Victory Week-end without a clue as to what to expect but again "something" moved inside of me and I confessed and shared with two total strangers, sins in my past that not even my parents or my two sons knew about. When Tertius showed us the clip from "The Passion" of the crucifixion of Christ, I felt as though someone had pierced me with a red-hot knife, that all the air had been knocked out of me and I just wept and wept. And then I learnt later on that what was shown in the film was nothing compared with what Jesus really suffered; the Cross began to take on a new meaning for me. Then followed counselling sessions with selected ladies from Patria and I was delivered of so much pain, guilt, shame, bitterness, regret, anger, unforgiveness and biggest of all, the curse of Free Masonry on my father's side of our family.

I was invited to join Gill's Bible Study Group; I started to read Christian novels and informative literature, to watch evangelistic dvd's, listen to Christian music, watch the God channel and TBN on television, read and study my Bible more and more and talk about Jesus more and more - AND I longed for Sunday mornings at Patria! I was Baptized in November, Pastor Dave prayed over me one Sunday and the next thing I knew I was on the floor but I didn't know how I had got there. But still I was not convinced that I was hearing either God or the Holy Spirit speaking to me, nudging me every now and then.

Two friends blessed me when they made it possible for me to attend the Ladies' Burning Brighter Retreat at Carmel 24-26th July. And it was there, on the Saturday night in the lovely little chapel, that I finally knew and accepted without a shadow of a doubt that I was spoken to by the Holy Spirit and so much confusion was totally eradicated from my mind and was replaced with Revelation, with God's Love and with the greatest amount of Pure Joy I have ever experienced.

Since then, I have experienced an incredible change in my whole being - my attitude, my outlook on my new way of life here in George, my mindset, my thoughts, the feelings on my heart and I believe that God's purpose for me right now is to be just where I am. Of course there are still times of "homesickness", longing for Zim friends and family, and anxiety for those I've left behind. But I now know that there's a season and a reason for everything, and this too shall pass. And how amazing is it that I have been able to forgive Robert Mugabe and his cohorts for the terrible damage they have done to a once happy and flourishing nation. How amazing is it that I can truly say that "I love Robert Mugabe, but I hate the sin in him and yet I forgive him" because now I know that I know, that I know. How much I pray for his salvation, so much more do I pray for my family and friends who are not yet saved.

During her message to us at the Ladies' Retreat, Rosemary asked us to "Please be aware of how you use the word awesome; too often it is used flippantly and without real meaning". I know that I have every right now to use that word when I say "How AWESOME is Our God" and to Him I give all the Glory for this incredible change in the person of Priscilla Lane.

Sunday, 13th September, 2009 is a very special anniversary for me - I shall have been here for a whole year and I thank and Praise Our Father for His Grace that enables me to accept and do so much that not so long ago I would have refused to accept and do! Amen.