

Opening the SD-E gathering

Dear Companions, it is a great privilege to be here, in this blessed country, and this blessed place, Skálholt. As we enjoy being here, let's just remember two facts. On the one hand we are pilgrims, and on the other, we are sojourners.

Pilgrims, as we were born, live, and will return to the Father. Pilgrims, who are in this fragile and dangerous world, and we are heading towards the kingdom of our Father. As Paul wrote in Colossians 3:1-2 "seek the things that are above, where Christ is... Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." We are living on this earth, with all our weaknesses, faults, shortcomings and problems, but we are heading to the Kingdom, where Jesus promised us to prepare a place for us (John 14:3). And we are pilgrims who started from our countries, after a long period of Covid-19, isolation and difficulties. We tried to meet two years ago, one year ago in this country, and after three years here we are. Enjoying each other's presence, chatting with each other and seeing each other face to face. Not on a screen, not on Zoom, but in flesh and blood, as real brothers and sisters. We arrived to this beautiful country, and now we are on sacred land. We came to a pilgrimage to hear the land speak. And this land has started to whisper to us as we were driven from the airport to Skálholt. We may have seen this island first from the airplane, or from the monitor in front of us, or some pictures from our website. Anyway, it is a great privilege to see it now with our own eyes. When you stepped out from your airplane you may have taken a bow to the land which accepted you to be trodden on. This earth is accepting us, we walk and live on it. Do not forget for a moment that you are a pilgrim. You are mortal, and you seek eternal. We are here to hear the land speak, to observe its beauty, but also to hear each other speak, and most of all to hear our Lord speak to us. If we will be enough quiet, He will speak to us. There are stones, rocks, lava, rivers, creeks, geysers, waterfalls, birds, swans, flowers, trees and grass which can talk to us. Let's listen to them in the next days to come.

And in the same time we are sojourners. We inherited this planet, it was given to us in order to work it and take care of it (Genesis 2:15). It was not meant to be trodden by tanks, military vehicles, but we always want more, there is never enough. We easily forget that we are sojourners in this world and in this country. We are guests, and we should behave like guests. We are not the creator, we are not the master, we are not the owner. We simply use what was given to our care. Let's then work it and take care of it. We are here to admire the precious gift entrusted to us. If I would use an image, it is as we have lived for the last two years confined to our caves. And after two years of social distancing, we were given the opportunity to come out, to see each other, to enjoy each other's company. We need time to readapt to freedom and to the fellowship of others. And we are here, ready to hug each other, to smile to each other, to listen to each other. We are the children of the same Father, coming from 17 different countries, different denominations. We are a big family, we are companions, who were entrusted to lead people to our Lord. Let's listen together to what the land speaks to us, to what we say to each other, and what the Lord will reveal to us. May God bless all of you!