

Greater than a Presidential Pardon

The Simonian Farm in Fresno, California is one of the most renowned family-run produce farms in the United States. Founded in 1901 by Armenian immigrant, Baghdasar Simonian, ownership of the farm has passed through three generations of family leadership to its current owners, Dennis and Bonnie Simonian. Situated on 80 acres in the San Joaquin Valley of California, the Simonian Farm produces more than 180 crops, and seasonal fruits including cherries, peaches, nectarines, apricots, apples, pomegranates, blackberries, grapes, boysenberries, and figs.

One September day in 1995 the Simonians learned that they would receive a visit from the president of the United States, Bill Clinton. They received a telephone call regarding this special visit less than an hour before Clinton was to arrive. So what began as a normal day of vocational routine turned into an emotional frenzy bordering on pandemonium in preparation for the president's visit.

Given all that had to be done, and the honor of meeting the president, the Simonians decided that their daughter, Ashley, should miss school. Because meeting the President was such a rare opportunity, they further believed no teacher would refuse to grant an excused absence for their daughter.

Just as they said they would, President Clinton and his entourage arrived at the Simonian Farm, and marveled at the operations, and products of the farm. The president also signed several autographs. While he was signing Ashley's memory book, an onlooker mentioned that Ashley had skipped school to meet him. Without hesitation, and in the middle of the farm produce store, the president invoked his full authority and wrote an excuse for Ashley's absence from school that day. In essence, she had a Presidential Pardon!

"Presidential pardons have been issued for murderers, thieves, embezzlers, and derelict soldiers. But I imagine Ashley's pardon was a first in American history: a presidential pardon for absence from school. Regardless of his or her politics, it would be a rare teacher who would refuse to accept an excuse from one of the most powerful authorities on earth".



Can you imagine how this written pardon by the president would be cherished, and for generations to come, it would be the centerpiece for the momentous events of that day? From the frantic scramble to prepare for the president's arrival, to his actual presence, and signing of the excuse, this presidential pardon would forever be etched in the minds of the Simonian family.

Yet, you and I have a pardon, which is of greater value than

any excuse note written by a government official including the President of the United States. We have a pardon written by the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! More than any excuse, we have a pardon for our sins, written with the

precious blood of Jesus Christ! When we read 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness," we read our pardon! Praise God for Jesus' blood! Praise God for Jesus' sacrifice! Praise God for this pardon! And because of this pardon, we can joyously look forward to Jesus' soon return!

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1 www.wikipedia.org and www.simonianfarms.com

2 □ Henry, Jim. In Remembrance of Me. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, p. 162.