

## *Side by side*

*“He spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, ‘Remove the filthy garments from him.’ Again he said to him, ‘See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes.’” Zechariah 3:4 (NASB)*

Recently, I attended the ceremony of an installation of a chief at a local village in Togo (TOH-go). It was a grand event that does not happen often. Everyone attends, young and old, even if it means walking miles to the event. There are chiefs from other villages and government officials in attendance. Each person, whether important or ordinary, is in his best dress. Crowns even adorn the heads of dignitaries.

At this particular event, there was one lowly, uninvited guest. He was wearing dirty rags. To the bystanders, the poor man was considered the local “crazy man.” As important officials made glorious speeches to the throngs of people, the “crazy man” walked in front, made his own speeches as he looked into the sky and shook his fist to his imaginary friends. He was so much a part of the village that the people ignored him and avoided contact with him. I could only feel pity and pray for the man.

But as I watched, there was one man who walked up to the “crazy man” and gently placed his arm around him. Then, side by side, he led the man outside of the crowd. I knew that there was a lesson God wanted to teach me.

Christmas this year will be sweeter. God didn’t avoid me when I was in the filthy rags of sin, but He walked along beside me and brought me to salvation. Jesus walks along beside me even when I momentarily avoid Him. May I stay ever close to Him!

—KATHY, WEST AFRICA

*Fulber,* THANK YOU FOR SAVING ME. THANK YOU FOR TAKING AWAY MY FILTHY GARMENTS AND CLOTHING ME WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS BECAUSE OF YOUR SON, JESUS. MAY YOU DRAW THE UNLOVELY OF THE WORLD TO YOURSELF THROUGH YOUR SERVANTS. HELP ME TO MINISTER TO THE POOR, THE NEEDY AND EVEN THE HOMELESS THIS CHRISTMAS SEASON. *Amen.*