



The Pilgrim

Paul Almond

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In 1896, young rector Jack Alford is sent to the implacable, granite shores of Labrador on the vast St. Lawrence River. Hazards imperil his life as he travels this harsh 450-mile coastline by boat and dogsled, to visit his far-flung parishioners. Jack also manages to rescue a cook from the crew of a schooner to keep him company on his travels.

But in this fourth book of THE ALFORD SAGA, his zeal for the welfare of Labrador's hardy parishioners diverts Jack from his romance. Through summer storms that menace his tiny mission boat and fierce blizzards that almost annihilate his dog team, Jack brings succour to stranded families, care and leadership to villages perched on the windy granite, and, finally, inspired teachings in hill-top churches that stand as beacons of hope among the seal-fishers and rugged pioneers of Labrador.

The Pilgrim Details

Date : Published July 23rd 2013 by McArthur & Company (first published July 16th 2012)

ISBN : 9781770871632

Author : Paul Almond

Format : Paperback 244 pages

Genre :

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From Reader Review The Pilgrim for online ebook

Sharon Huether says

The Pilgrim: Book Four of the Alford Saga by Paul Almond What a wonderful account of the many events of a new Deacon on the rough inland coast of Labrador. A frozen mass in winter. He traveled with a team of experienced dogs as he visited all small parishes a distances of 450 miles. God had called him to be a clergyman, clear as a voice in the night. There were no doctors or nurses in this long stretch of coastline. Prayer was sometimes all he could do for the many people that really needed medical help. In his first year there he married many couples, buried children, preached on Sundays and taught school. He also fell in love with Lorna, but was never ready for total commitment. He accomplished all with no decorum to follow.

Kris says

'The Pilgrim' is the fourth book in Paul Almond's Alford Saga. The books focus around the life and then family of James Alford, beginning in the early 1800's until the current book which takes place in the late 1800's.

In 'The Pilgrim' Jack Alford is a new deacon and has been assigned a remote, 450 mile long parish along the Labrador coastline. Jack needs to grow comfortable in his new role as minister, learn how to drive a dog sled team, teach his parishioners children, solve conflicts arising in his communities, and actually survive the harsh winter. Then just to make Jack's life more interesting he meets and eventually learns to love Lorna, a young woman he rescued from a schooner.

I enjoyed 'The Pilgrim', it was a pleasure to read and experience the hardships and problems Jack Alford experienced during his first year in Labrador. I was impressed by the amount of work that minister's were expected and required to perform in very dangerous situations. As part of the Alford saga 'The Pilgrim' fit in with the previous three books well. In fact, I felt that 'The Pilgrim' acted to revitalize the saga and infuse the reader with a renewed interest in the Alford family.

Sverre says

==Hardship and romance in an inhospitable climate==

This, the fourth book in the Alford family history saga, is as consistently good as the first three but I have rated it five stars—higher than the four I assigned the others—because of its thoroughly authentic portrayal of life in the Gulf of St Lawrence and the Labrador coast at the end of the nineteenth century. The incredible hardships endured by these settlers: codfishers, seal hunters, trappers, sailors and traders in an unpredictable inhospitable environment required survival skills, fierce determination and open-handed teamwork.

The story is told by John/Jack Alford the son of Jim Alford, and the grandson of James Alford, both of whom were the main characters in the third book, Pioneer. John has graduated from university in Montreal, aspiring to be an Anglican clergyman (contrary to the wishes of his father who has wanted him to be a doctor). He has been assigned to be the deacon of the Mission of St Clement's parish, comprised of dozens of small outposts on St Lawrence's northern shore and coastal islands on a four hundred mile east-west

stretch. On arrival he feels incompetent to fulfill his role as shepherd for the Lord's flock but also—by default, as circumstances demanded—as rescuer, healer, counselor, conciliator, social worker, and supportive manual labourer. He quickly matures to become a much admired disciple of Christ and a friend for anyone in need.

This book is very much about a young woman's adoration and expansive love for John, and his genuine attraction for her. But whereas she is demonstratively devoted to him and yearns for his commitment he is a reluctant candidate to formalize a relationship. The reader will cheer them on in anticipation and the author provides a skilful conclusion.

The book is loosely based on some of the author's ancestors as well as real historical figures and events. It is full of adventure, tragedy and anguish but also includes the joy and contentment which strong faith, family ties and close affinity between people can provide. Highly recommended for fans of historical fiction and Canadian history.
