

We've had a deeply rich experience of Huch'uy Runa (Cusco) today.

We left the hotel on foot at 9:00 in order to meet Sr. Clara Silva Santander at Huch'uy Runa at 9:30, it being across the Plaza and up the hill from our hotel. We arrived to be greeted by several staff members and seated around a large table in the staff room. (You walk through the bakery from the street as one way in; you can also go up alley stairs.) Clara rushed in as only Clara can do (no one need doubt who this is!) and warmly greeted us (big, long hug for me). She then explained the reasons for and the holistic philosophy of HR, using a targetlike diagram that had the boys and girls at the center. The first surrounding rings had to do with physical health. These were followed by psychological, spiritual wholeness as well as academic and trade learning. We were struck that recreation was close to the center, and she explained that these children are expected to work every minute; they don't get chances to play outside of the HR experience. We then were shown the tin-workshop, woodworking shop, pottery room, and craft room in each of which a proud and proficient child explained their training and work. (Sue Schultz, Susan Kish Hoel, Mark Werley, and Damon Howard will remember this routine.)

At the first workshop (tin), the children asked to sing to us! They sang a praise song that I would think they use as a morning or table prayer. Our ensemble responded . . . but Clara quickly put her head in to urge us to the next workshop and to save the singing for the entire assembly. AND it was an assembly. What we didn't know was that today was graduation day! While many children had already left for winter break (their relatives expected them to work), quite a number of children and parents remained. After a long speech from the principal and some introductions, we were asked to sing. The Women's Ensemble sang two of the Spanish songs to great applause. Then names of HR graduates (grade 6, the terminal grade at HR) were read out, certificates given (along with hugs) by Clara, and a line of graduates formed. When all had received their certificates, they returned one by one to the microphone, held by an instructor, and to thank Sr. Clara for her role in their lives. Tears flowed . . . and of course hugs followed. What a blessing of a surprise for us to be part of this important day!

Then, of course, we bought some of the children's crafts while the staff brought us tea and Christmas fruitbread from their bakery. We left about 12:45 to find a restaurant for lunch. We were to be picked up at 3 to go to Talitha Kum, but as we returned to the hotel, the heavens opened to a stinging downpour of rain and hail. I thought my umbrella would be punctured; David Clarke bought one (and then had to buy another pair of shoes since the one pair he had brought to Cusco were completely soaked). I thought it unwise to go to TK owing to the extremely muddy roads the rain would create, and our travel guide, Rita Vargas, thought so as well. As I stepped into the hotel lobby (small) I sensed someone sitting in the dining area to my right. Jessica had come to escort us to TK. I was overwhelmed by another wave of deep emotion. What a great joy to see her.

Of course she was disappointed with our decision, and she phoned her mother, Julia Huaman, the foundation of TK along with Pastora Ofelia, to say we weren't coming. Still, the girls were

arriving in the lobby for the trip to TK, so we gathered in the dining room for an hour's visit with Jessica . . . and the girls sang several songs for her. I couldn't be more proud of this team!

Incidentally, Pastora Luisa has been invaluable throughout as our translator. Jen Rustad has done well (along with several others) when Luisa wasn't immediately with us.

Jessica urged us to visit Thursday, and if the morning is clear, we will do so then. (They have bought soft drinks and treats for us, and probably decorated, too.) Tomorrow (Wednesday) we go to Machu Picchu, a needed break from the high emotion and good work we've experienced. Clara and Rita still try to obtain permission for the Ensemble to sing in the cathedral (on the Plaza de Armas) or one of the other great churches Thursday evening. That would be a capstone to our Cusco visit.

We've had our team meeting to check in with each other, share thoughts about the day, and pray. I've stayed in the lobby to write this, and I need to get some sleep, too. Breakfast will be early as we must leave at 6:50 a.m.

Thanks for your prayers and support,

P.dale

We're about ready to go to Machu Picchu. I should have explained in my prior e-mail that Jessica of Talitha Kum was one of the three young women confirmed during our visit two years ago. She and her friend Cynthia now take the Bible studies and worship services when Pastora Ofelia cannot be present. They are a true gift to the church. More after a wonderful day. Happy New Year all. P.dale