

Remarks by Bob McCue at the Missionary Farewell of Brayden McCue

October 28, 2001

Brayden asked us to make sure that this meeting did not sound like a eulogy for him, and we will try to do that. However, I want to say before proceeding with the rest of my talk that I am extremely proud of how Brayden has chosen to live his life to this point.

We have with us today many family members who have travelled from long distances, and friends from all over the City. Thank you for being here with us.

I would like to particularly thank our friends who are not members of this church for taking the time to share this special family occasion with us. I would like in particular to express my appreciation to my business associates who are here today for the way in which they enrich my life. I admire and look up to them in many ways.

From time to time my friends who are not members of our church have asked me why I went on a mission, and more generally why our church sends missionaries into parts of the world that are already Christian. I would like to briefly answer those questions by sharing with you some experiences I had while travelling in Peru this summer where I served my mission almost 25 years ago. I believe that most missionaries have experiences and feelings of the type I am about to relate.

I served 10 months of my two-year mission in the part of Peru we visited. During those 10 months, I was privileged to get to know and teach the gospel to three families who chose to commit themselves to live in accordance with the teachings of the Gospel. I was with each family for on average about two months, and I played a small role in their decision to live their lives in accordance with the gospel of Jesus Christ. I should make it clear that these people, before we met them, were good Christian people. They recognized something in the Gospel message we brought to them that would help them to become even better at loving and relating to members of their family and others, and to so find greater joy in life.

Just before I left Peru in early 1979 my diary was stolen. It contained the addresses of these and many other people I had intended to stay in touch with. Once back in Canada, I tried through various means get in touch with them, but couldn't. One of my main purposes in travelling to Peru was to attempt to re-establish contact with them. It seemed at times like we were looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack.

One Sunday we had been told that the Rios family, one of the families I was looking for, might be attending church at a particular chapel in the city we were visiting. We found the building with the help of a cab driver, entered it and were told that the Rios family did indeed attend that ward. Someone volunteered to go find Bro. Rios for us. By the way, within the Church we refer to each other as Brother and Sister, since we believe that we are all children of the same Heavenly Father. Moments later a small man who looked vaguely familiar came down the hall toward us. I told him who I was, and he looked confused. My heart fell since I assumed that we had been directed to the wrong family. However, he then said that perhaps it was his brother I was looking for, and disappeared around a corner. Moments later I saw Brother Rios walking towards us. I knew him the moment I saw him, told him who I was and we immediately embraced. We chatted for a few minutes in the hall, and then went into an empty classroom to continue our visit. One after another, Sister Rios and four of the Rios' six adult children joined us.

Sister Rios is particularly emotional and spiritual. She burst into tears as soon as she saw me, which caused the rest of us to break into tears. The initial few minutes I spent with her and her family will remain one of the emotional highlights of my life. Sister Rios reminded me of the dreams she had while we taught her family the gospel. In those dreams she saw the Saviour beckoning to her, and calling her to follow him and listen to us. This helped her to decide to pay close attention to what we had to say. One of her adult daughters reminded me of the time when she was five years old and so sick that the doctors had told her family there was nothing more they could do. Her fever was bad enough that she had been delirious for a several days. Her parents asked me to give her a blessing of health of health – in effect to heal her if it was God's will. My companion and I laid our hands on her head in the manner described in the New Testament and promised her in Jesus name that she would recover. Within hours her fever broke and she began to come back to life. Her family counts this among the miracles the gospel brought to them. Being reminded this significant event caused a tremendous emotional surge inside of me. We again all shed tears, and while crying I tried to translate for the benefit of my family what I was being told, and was remembering, of the experiences I had with the Rios family during their conversion process.

Four of the Rios six children have also served as missionaries for our Church. A number of relatives have joined the Church on both sides of their family, and many of their children have served missions. They estimate that well in excess of 100 people have committed themselves to live in accordance with the gospel as a direct result of their family joining the Church.

As I sat in the embrace of the Rios family while we reacquainted ourselves I was filled with a euphoria that I have only felt on a few other occasions in my life. As we left the chapel after visiting with them for about half an hour, Brayden said that he could hardly wait to be able to take his family to the Ukraine when

he was my age so that they could meet the people he was going to grow to love there.

Time doesn't permit a full description of the reunions we had with the other two families we had been looking for, or of the many things we did with them and the Rios family for the week that we were in their city. However, I should say that we found both of the other families in circumstances similar to those of the Rios family. Each of these three wonderful families has continued for all these years to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ. Each have had children serve missions and other family members become members of the Church. And most importantly, when I was with each of them I could feel the peace and joy that typifies faithful followers of the Saviour. This is not a party time, candyfloss kind of joy. It is more like the calm beneath the ocean's turbulent surface. A calm that permeates, supports and underlies all that we do, and helps us to endure life's difficulties with patience and grace.

Over and over again while we were with these people they thanked me, often with tears in their eyes, for being one of those who brought a life-changing message to them. The bond I feel to them is what compelled me at the first reasonable chance to travel half way around the world and seek them out. It is a privilege to feel this strongly about other human beings, and an even greater privilege to have those feelings reciprocated. Relationships of this type are priceless.

Brothers and Sisters, the only thing that is unique about my experience with my Peruvian friends is that I lost touch with them, and so our reunion involved more drama than usual. The feelings I have for them and they for me are typical of what exists between missionaries and the people to whom they introduce the gospel. These relationships, and the joy that flows from them, is why generation after generation of young missionaries like Brayden put school, careers and girl or boy friends on hold for two years to carry the Saviour's message into the world. Some, like Brayden and me, go to the far corners of the earth. Other's, like some of Brayden's friends and relatives, have gone to exotic places like Saskatchewan or Idaho. The place, language and culture do not matter. The relationships formed between the missionaries and those they teach are the same.

I would like to ask that for a moment you each think of the many relatively shortlived relationships you have had with people over the years. People you have worked with for a few months, people you studied with for a few months, etc. Now imagine how you would feel if after many years you bumped into one of those people. How would that affect you?

I am fascinated by the nature of the relationship I have with these Peruvian families. We were only together for a short time almost 25 years ago. We have had no contact since then, and our reunion caused an emotional earthquake. To me this speaks volumes of the importance of the event I was privileged share

with them – of the importance of the role I was privileged to play in their lives. Again, that is why we serve missions.

I am thrilled that Brayden saw some of the fruits of my missionary labours before he went on his mission. There are many more tough days than euphoric days during a mission, and he has seen an aspect of the harvest of my seeds sown that will help him through the tough days.

As Henry David Thoreau said, “Humility, like darkness, reveals heavenly lights.” Brayden’s mission will give him the opportunity to plumb depths of humility he cannot understand until he experiences them. Just as I could not adequately prepare our family him for what the poverty of Peru would make him feel, I can’t by explanation prepare him for the challenges of missionary life. In the soul stretching, difficult experiences he will have during his mission, he will come to know God. And knowing God, he will be able to introduce to him the Ukrainian people he will come to love. The memory of what Brayden saw in the reunion I had with my Peruvian friends will hopefully help him through that process.

I want you to know that I believe with all my heart that the message carried by the missionaries of this Church is the complete gospel of Jesus Christ, and that each of us, both members and non-members of this Church, will find more joy and peace in our lives as we become better at following that message.

I am far from a perfect person. Everyone who knows me more than a little can testify to that. The gospel, however, is perfect. I want you each to know that the influence of the gospel in my life has refined me and improved me. The best parts of my character are due in large measure to the gospel’s influence. It has therefore helped me to find much of the joy that is in my life. My friends in Peru feel the same way about their lives, and that is why they feel such gratitude toward me. I was the humble, inarticulate, 19 year old messenger who was privileged to bring them a life-changing message.

I would finally like to publicly acknowledge my love for my wife, Juli, and for our children. Juli is the heart and soul of our family. Our children’s loving nature is her doing. I have to take credit for the hard edges a few of them have. My parents and Juli’s father are also here. Juli’s mother is overseas and unable to attend. Our parents have played and continue to play a regular and important role in our lives and the lives of our children. I love them very much, and hope I can follow their example of how to be both a parent and a grandparent.

We all wish you good luck, Brayden.

I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.