

The Ending News Never

There's always something! Things keep happening!

Los mormones son llorones (Mormons are crybabies). So said Elder Sánchez in testimony meeting this morning. Because we were all weeping. "Cada lágrima es una perla que lleva a la vida eterna," he said. (Every tear is a pearl that leads to life eternal.) It's true that if we never have occasion to weep then our lives most likely are too superficial. After six talks in priesthood meeting, only two minutes were left for me. Discarding my mental notes, I decided just to tell the elders how much I love them. My intended theme was "He that is faithful in a very little..." (Luke 19:17), to remind them of the need to keep the simple rules of the CEM as a preparation for greater responsibilities and rewards. Uninvited, a couple of tears rolled down my cheeks, because I truly love them. Wish I showed it better with my deeds, as Merrill does, washing their clothes, cleaning, baking cookies and cakes, and helping in every way.

After priesthood meeting, Elder Fernández asked for an interview, in which he complained about his companion and tried to justify his own impatient, inconsiderate behavior. Knowing how much he admires his father, a bishop whom I've met, I suggested to him that he was just starting his mission now, with the first of what would be 7 or 8 companions, and that if he treated them with consideration, patience, forgiveness, and love, he would end up to be a great man like his dad, tested, tried, experienced, and very successful at human relations. In testimony meeting, Elder Fernández expressed regret at the way he had been treating his companion, asked for forgiveness, and left the stand long enough to give him a hug. If anything will make us cry, with joy, it is seeing the gospel in action, converting the negative to positive, the darkness to light.

Hna. Iglesias was so overcome with emotion in the meeting that she couldn't continue. Her tears were shed for her older brother, a cripple unable to walk. I thought again of John 9:3 and the man who was blind from birth: "...that the works of God should be made manifest in him." We would all be hopeless cripples, spiritually, if we were incapable of feeling and expressing compassion and had no opportunities to do so. What are the works of God? Things that enlarge our souls, that we may inherit eternal life. The young man not only gained his sight but also love of his Savior and courage and faith. I never tire of reading how he answered the Lord's accusers, when others feared what they might do. And when they had cast him out, Jesus came to him and said: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him." (John 9:35-38)

School thy feelings, oh my brother... His face was set. He was going home to Uruguay. I knelt at the lower bunk (Oy, oy, elephant leg!), squeezed his left shoulder, at the arm, and patted his right one. He is club-footed and hobbles awkwardly, self-consciously--not without pain. He speaks with the Uruguayan-Argentine accent that I love and which others sometimes ridicule, in fun, insensitive to sensitivity lines that should be respected and not crossed. Under other circumstances, a guy could take it, but this is CEM-Sión (MTC-Zion), the nearest approach to the earthly paradise, where love, compassion, appreciation, and understanding are supposed to reign. I expressed my sincere admiration for him. (When he and his mother joined the Church, the father kicked them out. When he left a good job to come on a mission, fortunately he was able to persuade his boss to give it to his mother.) I mentioned how his mission president can't wait to meet him, having heard so many fine things from me about this splendid young missionary from Uruguay. I suggested that this was just one more experience that would help him to build up reserves of strength. We can't let our happiness depend too much on what others do and say, you know. ¡Estaríamos fritos! (We'd be fried!... In a fine fix!) Thus encouraged, he got up from

his bunk and joined the family home evening that was being held up until I could come. I spoke a few words about the joy the gospel brings when applied, and the effect was visible almost at once. Peace and harmony descended on the CEM again and paradise was regained, as it must be again and again. I like to tell the missionaries that there is a solution for everything through the gospel-- including death, thanks to our Savior's sacrifice. Many times the outlook may be dishearteningly bleak, but if we really try, struggle, and pray, things work out for the best.

To the tune of "The Last Roundup". I'm headin' for the last windup... like an old worn-out mechanical clock that is running down. Sometimes I mention the upper front teeth that abandoned me when my face whacked the ice on the Kershaw Street hill, Ogden, Utah, whereas the five lower ones got smacked just as hard and all of the pretty enamel crowns cleanly and jaggedly got busted off. The best of them has now come loose, intending to leave me too. Also the hair of my head faithlessly continues to drop out. But the hair on my chest, so lonely to these many years, is holding tight. By hang, as long as he hangs in there and I know he's there, I'll be all right.

iSeas muy bienvenido, Aarón Hall! Welcome, Aaron! A quote from John's letter of Sept. 10: "Little Aaron is doing great! He looks more like Ammon every day. He is very good natured and doesn't cry much. He has an incredible repertoire of expressions. The other night, we all about died laughing as we watched the changing expressions on his face. Two of the more common expressions are one of wonderment and the other is one of stern seriousness." Another quote (John is quite the stake missionary): "We are doing so much teaching that we usually have three appointments set up every evening. We are teaching some families that will be baptized soon and others that are more long-term prospects but it is all very enjoyable." Monday night I rushed out of class to take a long-distance call, sure that it was Richard telling us about their new daughter. But the line went dead before I heard a word and that was that. Aaron is grandchild No. 23 and we can't wait for Little Miss Double Dozen.

Mature faith. When yours is so certified, I'll tell you about my small, quivering hope. For the first and probably the last time in my life, a series of circumstances converged practically assuring that my otherwise unimportant voice would be heard. I could not fail to make use of this one-time opportunity, at whatever personal cost. My only desire was to do so quietly and, as stated in a previous letter, in sincerity, peaceableness, and love. Those who do not care, to the point of seeing nothing and wanting to see nothing, do nothing. Nothing is their affair, nothing is their business, nothing is their concern. This is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Saints are not uncaring, see-nothing, do-nothing persons. I care, and have attempted to nudge certain things in a certain direction, not presumptuously, but because plain, self-evident truth will not allow me to do otherwise. Some day, perhaps soon, if you're interested, you will be able to judge for yourselves whether what I have sought to do is right.

Ever-loving Mom and Dad / Merrill and Wendell

Ida Rose: No need to send B.O.M's. We are receiving all we can use. Thanks for your letter + the "Bartholomew Book."

*note to family: maybe not B.O.M's but if any of you have any extra folding money, I'll bet Wendell + Merrill could use some for "shirts" + stuff for some of those struggling elders.
Miom Hall*