



Mother of God



I could see the mountains that lead to Machu Picchu through my window. Shades of jagged brown and khaki, dark deep valleys and a patchwork of green, yellow and orange crops on the slopes, below a crispy blue sky.

It had been a quiet morning. Grace, Faith and Hope had waved me off. Empty Sunday streets to the airport allowed me to think and talk to God. Someday, I prayed, we would start a work for little children in the southern jungle near Bolivia, but first I would see it for myself, scout out the area, make a few contacts and dream.

I don't much care being away from my girls. I would trade all the excitement of my homecomings, all the laughter and shrieking, the balloons and posters with invented welcome words and stay home in a heartbeat, if it weren't for the children I see on my way to the airport. Little boys and their sisters, waking up on the dirty cold pavement, staggering to my window for a coin. Perspiring, shaking and hungry. Frightened eyes on paltry faces. Small bodies that Jesus takes in his arms and blesses. God wants them to have the same future and hope that my children have and I count it an honor that he is using me in some small way. I drive on.

Lan Peru flight 071. Fifty minutes to Cusco and a short-haul flight to the jungle. If I've done it once I've done it a hundred times. It's a knee-jerk reaction to air travel. Not a whole lot of thought goes into it. It's always an easy and straight forward exercise, but it wasn't to be that today.

As we circled our layover airport for what seemed an eternity, I had time to pray for everyone I love, placing their lives in God's hands as I bit every nail off mine. Tailwinds rocked our jet from side to side, thrusting the fuselage angrily in a desperate downward twister. Ladies yelled and men stiffened. We roller coastered into a gulf of turbulence, my hands were cold and sticky, my stomach had lodged in my neck.

The captain came on. In the usual casual voice and broken English, he tried his best. We would land in Arequipa, on the coastal desert near Chile, then back to Cusco when the winds died down, but our flight into the jungle had been cancelled.

We were put up in a nice hotel and given meals, not at all a part of the plan. The next morning, (after an extended devotional!), I boarded a new plane and secured my seat belt in 22C. We cut through thunder in the lower jungle for 30 minutes before touching down. I sigh of relief went through my body; Mother of God! +

I flagged down a rickshaw and found a place to stay. I went to the marketplace and the main square. I was determined to make up for lost time. Someday soon when I can take a frightened child to a place where he will be loved, to a home where he will live with boys his age and grow into a Godly man, I will know that this trip was time well spent.

+ The jungle province I finally landed in is called Madre de Dios (Mother of God)