

The Next Sunday

Sunday, 20 January, 2008

One week ago, our rig came off the ship damaged. We didn't know if it was destroyed or not.

One week ago, a couple of kids playing with matches started a brush fire that became a wind driven firestorm that destroyed 88 homes in Valparaiso's Cerro La Cruz neighborhood. That fire became known as The Inferno of La Cruz.



Photo by Stephanie Hackney

Today, one week later, the next Sunday, we returned to Cerro La Cruz.

We arrived just in time to attend an open air mass, conducted among the ruins.



We have attended religious services of many types and languages all around the world. I can remember none more moving.



The mass included a very sad announcement regarding the funeral services for the neighborhood woman who died of her burns and for the volunteer fireman who died of injuries incurred battling the blaze. The latter announcement was particularly hard for the priest, who is a volunteer fireman himself.



The Next Sunday

After mass we connected with some friends we made on our previous visits to the neighborhood. We were able to confirm that the soccer balls we passed out the day before were already broken in.



And that the shelter sets (tent, air mattress and two sleeping bags) we donated had indeed kept four families out of the cold and wind the night before.



Photo by Stephanie Hackney

The Next Sunday

We saw the same reminders of a life gone by, never to return.



Photo by Stephanie Hackney



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The Next Sunday

But we also saw some signs of the neighborhood beginning to recover and rebuild.



And that is what we were here for, this Sunday, the next Sunday.

We were here to do a small and simple thing to help these people rebuild their lives by replacing something they lost to the flames. We were here to replace the memories lost when every single photograph of every child, every family and every event turned to ashes and blew away with the wind.



The Next Sunday

We constructed a simple studio from a borrowed canopy and a couple of bed sheets, and invited everyone, even the family dogs.



And they came.



The grandfathers.

The Next Sunday



The families.



The children.



The young girls.



The men.

The Next Sunday



The stoic.



The strong.

The Next Sunday



The proud fathers



The siblings.

The Next Sunday



The boys.



The friends forever.



The burned.



And those burned out of everything except one child's shirt.



The bubbly children.



The neighborhood character.

The Next Sunday



Even the newlyweds who lost their wedding pictures.

They all came.

The photos we give them will not feed them for a day. The photos we give them will not shelter them for a night. The photos we give them will not rebuild their homes.

But the photos we give them, may, in some small way, help rebuild their lives.

If our ship had not been late, if our rig had not been damaged, we would have been down the road and would never have met the people of Cerro La Cruz. They would not know us, and we would not know them. We would never have had the opportunity to help them in this small way.

One week ago, on a bright and sunny Sunday, we thought we had lost our home. One week ago, on a bright and sunny Sunday, every one of these people lost their homes and everything in them.

This Sunday, the next Sunday, our home is repaired and we are ready to start our new life. This Sunday, the next Sunday, the people of Cerro La Cruz also begin a new life. It will not be an easy life, but it will be a life with one new memory, one new photo that they can hold, show and share.

The Next Sunday

This effort is part of our GivingPictures program. GivingPictures provides photos to people who have never held a photo of themselves, their family or their children, or to those, as for the people of Cerro La Cruz, who lost every photo they possessed.

You can learn more about our GivingPictures program at: <http://www.givingpictures.org/>

The story of our first visit to the people of Cerro La Cruz is here:
<http://hackneys.com/blog/2008/01/17/the-inferno-of-la-cruz/>

The story of our rig's shipping damage is here:

Part one: <http://hackneys.com/blog/2008/01/13/fuso-vs-valparaiso-dock-crew/>

Part two: <http://hackneys.com/blog/2008/01/16/fuso-vs-valparaiso-dock-crew-part-2/>

Unless otherwise noted, all photos by Douglas Hackney



Photo by Jorge Valdes

Douglas and Stephanie Hackney are on a two to three year global overland expedition.
You can learn more about their travels at: <http://www.hackneys.com/travel/index.htm>