

Namaste. This is a Sanskrit word that, as a yoga teacher, I say nearly every day. It is translated in different, but similar ways, but I love the translation that my teacher taught me — The Divine in me, sees the Divine in you. And, oh my, the Divine I saw in Ecuador.

There was so much planning involved to make our pilgrimage “perfect”. Dallas and Susana were already in Quito. I suspect God was giggling a bit when our departure from Chicago got so delayed that we missed our connection in Panama City and had to get 2 separate and very much later flights to Quito. Perhaps God was showing us how much control we don’t have, but then, I like to think He was filled with glee at seeing the big group hug, when at 1:00 a.m., we were finally all together, with God, in Quito.

I saw the Divine in the faces of the kind people at the Otavalo market ,where, they had pity on a poor fool who was not a good bargainer — except for when Dallas was doing the negotiating for me. Oh, and when I was trying to bring down the price of a piece, I saw the Divine in the beautiful face and the talent of the artist who said, “I made this all by hand.”

There are many times that I witnessed the Divine at work - in the food we were served with love and pride, the people we met, including a little girl, Josette, who entertained Anna and me for a time with her My Little Pony, all of the incredible, natural beauty of Ecuador, our walk from the waterfall in silence and the patience and sense of humor of our guide, Juan Carlos and our bus driver, Fausto.

But — then — there are these teens and their leaders. They accepted me into the group without question, giving me a voice, entertaining me and amazing me with their intelligence and profound understanding of their own spirituality. And best of all, there was the early morning parakeet watching trip. My limited physical abilities were on display, as I clumsily made my way down the river bank, about 5 minutes after the kids had settled into their seats in the canoe. I got a rousing, “Way to go, Barbara”. Namaste.

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