



The miraculous story of the Diospi Suyana hospital in Peru

In October, Dr Klaus-Dieter John visited churches across Ireland to share the miraculous faith journey that led him to build a mission hospital for the Quechua people of South America. He took time out from his schedule to chat with VOX editor Ruth Garvey-Williams.

Growing up in a Christian family in Germany, Klaus-Dieter John was weaned on stories of missionaries such as the “Jungle Doctor.” From an early age, he knew he wanted to become a missionary doctor, but he could never have imagined the adventure that lay ahead.

It has been a journey that has stretched his faith to the limits. “I have always been a bit of a ‘doubting Thomas,’” he shared. “I have more questions than answers in my life. For me, faith has meant clinging to the cross of Christ sometimes out of desperation. On one hand, I have a strong faith, but at other times, I sit at home and start crying out, ‘God, where are you? Will it be okay?’”

Pursuing his medical training with single-minded determination, Klaus became a surgeon while his wife, Martina, qualified as a paediatrician. The couple studied in the USA, UK and South Africa before finally heading out to serve at a mission hospital in Ecuador in 1997.

Here, Klaus and Martina saw first hand the challenges faced by the Quechua people. “Medical care for the Quechuas was horrible beyond description. Travel to one of the distant towns with better medical facilities was unaffordable for most. Sickness and death loomed over them like a dense, inescapable fog... I wanted to build a hospital for these people.”

Serving in Ecuador, Klaus soon discovered that prayer was as important as medicine. “Missionary doctors usually work in poorly resourced facilities.

Chronic shortages of both money and staff make it necessary to improvise almost constantly. This lack of security often causes doctors and nurses to seek refuge in prayer. I was no exception.”

Klaus remembers operating for hours to remove a gallstone that simply would not budge, no matter what they tried. Dr Kime, the anaesthesiologist, prayed, “God, you said that if we had faith the size of a mustard seed, we would be able to move mountains. This is just a tiny stone. Please help us.”

Seconds later, Klaus tried again and the gallstone slid free.

Still dreaming of building a hospital, Klaus remembers wondering how he and Martina would ever accomplish such a task. Despondently, he opened his devotional journal at the page for the day and read Psalm 32. Verse 8 jumped off the page: “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go.”

“Every great vision is born at a definite moment. For Diospi Suyana, it was that day - September 27, 2000. I suddenly had the rock-solid conviction that this mission hospital not only could be built - it would

be built.”

Klaus began working on a project proposal and studied maps, looking for the right place to build. In summer 2002, Klaus and Martina sent the proposal to 20 friends looking for their support. Many thought the couple had taken leave of their senses!

Returning to Germany, they gathered a few committed friends to form the charity Diospi Suyana (loosely translated “We trust

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in God”) and work began to raise funds for the planned hospital.

A survey trip to Peru identified the perfect location in the remote town of Curahuasi, and in 2003, they purchased a plot of land for \$25,000. Signing a development contract, they were committed to a project that was humanly impossible. “But praise God, the word ‘impossible’ is not in His vocabulary.”

There followed a fundraising marathon as Klaus and Martina met with hundreds of potential donors. For the first six months, gifts trickled in so slowly that the couple battled feelings of hopelessness, but breakthroughs came as the project caught the attention of German national media. By February 2005, they had received the equivalent of \$500,000.

But money was not the only challenge. Klaus was desperate to find an experienced engineer to oversee construction. During a conversation with a lawyer, the name Udo Klemenz came up. Klaus immediately telephoned Udo and asked whether he would consider moving to Peru to supervise the construction of a hospital... for free!

“My request was nothing short of laughable,” Klaus admitted but to his amazement, Udo invited him to visit that same evening. It turned out that Udo and his wife Barbara were committed Christians who had been praying for God’s guidance that very morning.

“We have been wondering whether God might have a special task for us to do.

The timing of your call this morning seems to indicate that God wants us to go to Peru!” Barbara said.

Visiting Curahuasi, Klaus was delighted to announce that work on the hospital would begin in May 2005. The town mayor was so overcome by emotion that he could

not speak. “In actuality, his tears said far more about what our hospital would mean for the people of Curahuasi than any speech could ever have done,” Klaus shared.

The ground-breaking ceremony took place on May 24, even though Klaus and Martina still only had a fraction of the needed funds for the building project. “From a human standpoint, our plan was totally crazy.”

And the challenges were only beginning. Corruption, logistical problems created by the remote location, and chronic lack of funds led to seasons of frustration, doubt and questioning. But even apparent dead ends often led to new opportunities and miraculous provision.

Sharing the vision, again and again, Klaus found that people were willing to support the “crazy” plan in very practical ways. The head of a glass company provided window panes at a 40% discount, while a Belgian company reduced the price of tiles and suspended ceilings by 30% after hearing the story!



When it came to importing thousands of euros worth of medical equipment (donated by German

companies), Klaus heard horror stories about customs in Peru. One priest had waited six years to receive an imported car! But with the help of Peru’s First Lady and fervent prayer, the first shipment of medical equipment cleared customs in just 90 minutes! “There was simply no human

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explanation for what had occurred,” Klaus said.

With the hospital nearing completion, Klaus turned his attention to recruiting highly qualified staff and again saw miracle after miracle as people were willing to come and work for free. By the end of 2006, the staff team had grown to 14 people. As well as working at the hospital, many helped Martina with running a Kids Club, attracting 300 children each week and providing opportunities to share about Jesus’ love!

Finally, the date was set for the dedication of the hospital - 31 August 2007 - but it took a herculean effort to ensure that everything was ready in time. It was a “mountain top” experience that quickly reverted to the reality of running a hospital day to day and finding the ongoing funding to make that happen.

By the end of 2016, the hospital had treated 200,000 patients. It employs 150 local people who work alongside 62 medical missionaries from around the world, 10 of whom come from Ireland!

Although the hospital’s primary focus is providing high-quality medical care for the poorest people of Peru, the Diospi Suyana team quickly found opportunities to share their faith. There are services in the hospital chapel every day, and a pastor works alongside the hospital to follow up with patients and their families.

A signpost leading up to the hospital reads, “Diospi Suyana - a hospital seeking to share the love of Christ.” This remains at the heart of the vision for Klaus and Martina and their dedicated team.

For Klaus himself, the journey has encouraged his wavering faith again and again. “I didn’t want to know about God; I wanted to see God. And through our story, God has become visible. You cannot prove there is a God, but for me, the evidence is piling up!”

You can read the full story of Diospi Suyana hospital in Klaus-Dieter’s book *I Have Seen God* or find out more on the website: www.diospi-suyana.org.

