

Peruvian Journal

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By Sister Sue Scharfenberger

Exactly at the time our community discerned our focusing on care of the earth and ecological sustainability, we find ourselves in Muquiyauyo, a community that lives from the fruits of the earth. Muquiyauyo is an agricultural community. At one time the fields were nurtured by the Mantaro River that runs through all of the state of Junín. However, for some time now the people have not been able to rely on the river to supply their irrigation needs as the water is severely contaminated by the mines that are at the entrance to the valley.

Even our drinking water after boiling it has a large residue of crystals left from the chemicals that are used to “purify” it. It is impossible to live here without being conscious at every minute of the need to recycle water, food wastes, and paper of any kind.

At present we are pursuing cement cylinders (called eco-cylinders) that are being used for compost and are being promoted by the diocese as a tiny step in our efforts to “care for the earth”. We are expecting some cylinders to be delivered tomorrow so that we can begin to participate more directly in this project and promote it with our people.

We mentioned last month the liturgy that was being planned as the official welcome and introduction of the Ursulines to Muquiyauyo. The bishop presided over the liturgy and blessed us as he presented us to the people. Each of us spoke, thanking God for calling us and leading us here, thanking the people for their generous and warm welcome, and expressing our hope to begin supporting and accompanying communities of faith in the pueblo.

The most moving part of the liturgy was at the moment of offerings and the people began to carry to the altar gifts of potatoes, wheat, dried beans. The procession seemed endless. They were women and men, children and youth, the simplest and poorest of the town who brought their gifts to the altar. The three of us were in tears as we experienced such generosity.

We immediately began distributing the gifts to the soup kitchen for the elderly and the children, and then looked for the elderly living alone in our town so as to share with them the fruits of the labors of so many. We became the channel for the solidarity of the people.

We continue to get to know the people, meeting different groups in the diocese, learning and listening from all of them. Yuli and Kathy have participated in the outings and retreats organized by the vicaría (similar to the deanery). Yuli has also participated in a national congress for teachers in Catholic schools.

We spent one day with the Ursulines of the Roman Union who live approximately an hour and a half from us. It was a wonderful visit and a great opportunity to reconnect with Angeline roots.

Carol joined us for her birthday and Carola also spent some time with us. It was a welcomed experience of community, of sharing, of touching that contemplative place where we all feel more connected to that burning desire to serve those in need.

We have been steeping ourselves in the message of Aparecida, which renewed the commitment of the Latin-American and Caribbean church to a preferential option for the poor. This same conference has initiated a permanent commitment to mission, to empowering the local communities of faith to a sense of participative discipleship.

We continue to hold all of you in our prayers and trust in yours as well.
Peace!

Yuli, Kathy, Sue