

THE PERUVIAN JOURNAL

Each month you learn more about the Ursuline Sisters ministries in Peru from Sister Sue Scharfenberger, Sister Yuli Oncihuay, or Sister Kathy Neely in the monthly "Peruvian Journal." But, in this month's edition, we bring you a special "guest." You'll meet a Peruvian woman who was asked to share her thoughts on the challenges faced in her home country and what brought her to live with the Ursuline Sisters in Muquiyauyo, Peru. Her "Peruvian Journal" is what follows:

My name is Rocío Barreda Polar. I [have been] living with the Ursuline Sisters here in Muquiyauyo since last year. When Sister Kathy asked me if I would like to write for OURS this month, I felt a little bit afraid and nervous, but at the same time I felt proud. She told me that I just needed to tell you about my work and what I'm doing here. I hope I can do it fine.

I'm from Callao and I met the Ursuline Sisters there. I worked for a long time in Santa Angela Merici School during two periods, 1984 to 1986, when I was just studying to be a teacher, and from 1993 to 2008. I love Santa Angela Merici School.

In 2008, a conversation with Sister Sue about her leaving to go to Muquiyauyo moved my heart. Since then, I was tossing the idea of coming to Muquiyauyo, too. I'm here since Christmas of 2008. I really enjoy this place. I like to see the green everywhere.

I'm a teacher, so I got a job as that. Last year, I worked in a school located in Masma, a countryside district near Jauja. The roadway takes you higher. It's about 3,600 or 3,700 meters above sea level. Jauja is about 3,400 meters, and you can see the mountains all dressed in green. It was really inspiring for me. I was really happy to work in a school like that. People there are very simple, even though it was not very easy at the beginning to get to know them. Almost all of them are farmers, and my students helped their parents with several chores, such as milking cows or taking their sheep to graze, or feeding other animals like guinea pigs (cuys), pigs or ducks. So the students couldn't study too much.

Schools in the countryside are not supported very well by the education authorities. There are a lot of things that are neglected here and teachers are really good people but, I think, they have lost their dreams as teachers. Most of the parents didn't support their children as they must, because they are working at the "chacra" (field). I did what I could with my students, trying to help them to love themselves, trying to convince them that they can do a lot of things if they decide it... and things like that. I'm sad because I'm not working there this year.

I'm now working in the biggest school of Jauja. It's called "San Jose" School, and I'm in the process of getting familiar with new things and people. Most of my students are from Jauja, but a lot of them came from the different districts and towns around Jauja. Teens are always a gift and a challenge [for] me. But I really like them. I really enjoy being with them... They don't know how alive they make me feel, maybe they would not understand that I feel [that way] myself when I'm in class with them.

As for you all, Lent time is a special one. We are preparing our hearts to live this time with people from Muquiyauyo, Huaripampa and Muqui. There are a lot of traditions people like to repeat year by year. We are trying to help make these rituals more sincere, and authentic. We wish a Happy Easter for you all!

~ Rocío Barreda Polar

