

THE PERUVIAN JOURNAL

A Month of Solidarity

Now that we've begun a new year, we are writing to you from sunny Callao. That is not just to make you envious since we know that you are enduring the ice and cold. It is to let you know that for us it is a pleasant relief from the rain and cold of the Sierra.

Shortly after writing the letter for January, we got news that Carol had fallen and had broken her ankle. Yuli and Sue were in Muquiyauyo at the time. It was right before some major activities there, and we were unable to make the next bus. But what seemed a tragedy at the time, and certainly was for Carol, turned out to be an experience of solidarity.

After Carol fell the people of Callao, many of whom were strangers, accompanied her to the emergency room. In the days that followed, some of our associates kept vigil with her, helping her with all the essentials of daily living. During those days, we all experienced the incredible love and presence of friends, especially our associates. Gladys Agurto and Vilma Tello were the two who stayed at the house for days at a time, cooking and caring for Carol. But there were several others who came to do her laundry, help with errands, or just stop in for a visit.

The unbelievable, and maybe not too prudent, was the trip she made with Sue to Muquiyauyo in order to spend Christmas with the community there. We have always given priority to our being together for major feasts, and so we had previously decided that Carol would join us in Muquiyauyo. It was an incredible effort on Carol's part, but we also had help getting to the bus station. A young friend had come by the day before with her fiancé and they offered to accompany us to the bus station, facilitating our taking a

wheel chair and making it so much easier to walk the long corridor of the bus station. And this was less than a week after the fall.

We are all familiar with the movie, "Pay it Forward." Well, just into the new year we were made aware of some friends from San Miguel who were needing a place to stay. Pilar, also an associate from San Miguel and her daughter, Yessenia, were in Lima visiting doctors and hospitals trying to get some explanation for Pilar's liver disease. They are now housed with us. The mother is in the hospital and the daughter comes back and forth and all of us are attending to their care while they are with us. What was thought to be a stay of a couple of days has turned into something much longer. It has been a gift having them here with us.

So it is solidarity that characterizes and clearly marks our experience of the last four weeks. That tells us that we are richly blessed. Building relationships of care and concern, of sharing heartaches and dancing dreams is really all that matters. There truly is no way to "return the favor." We can only pay it forward. And perhaps doing that we can avoid some of the damaging violence that we experience not only in Arizona, but across the country and certainly across the globe.

May 2011 bless us all with the experience of solidarity: giving it and receiving it!

~Sister Kathy Neely

