

# THE PERUVIAN JOURNAL



**By Sister Yuli Oncihuay**

Dear Friends,  
Sisters and Associates,

How are you? This month it is my turn to write to you.

Truly during this time I have been very busy,

now that I am teaching and need to prepare classes and materials daily. I would like to share with you about my work. I am teaching in a school that is called "Fe y Alegría" (Faith and joy). The school is located in a rural village called "Huasquicha". It is approximately a half hour from our house and there is a taxi that takes us daily to the school.

The village of Huasquicha is very small. It has one plaza where there is a small one-room school, a health clinic, a town hall and a few homes. Most of the people in Huasquicha are very simple and humble. Their work is mostly that of farming and caring for their sheep or other animals.

All of our classroom spaces are on loan to us while we await the construction of 4 classrooms for our school. One class is in a very small room of someone's house. Across the street is the third grade room, again very small and part of a building owned by the community of Huasquicha. The other classes are in spaces on loan to us by the state school whose enrollment has dropped severely in the last several years and whose grades 1-6 are all in one room.

This is only the second year for our school and we have grown from two classes to five this year. We are hoping to move into our new school very soon.

I am teaching 3 and 4 year olds, and share a classroom with another teacher who is teaching 5 year-olds. There is a curtain separating her "classroom" from mine. Truly it is a very difficult situation in which to work. We lack classroom furniture. I am using cardboard boxes that the children have brought for

my bookcases and shelves. Our tables and chairs are plastic.

Physically I am very tired, maybe even exhausted. But I am also very happy teaching in this new situation. Applying the Montessori method with these children is truly a gift and a grace, and it is in this situation for which Montessori was truly intended, where it is needed, and where it should be applied.

The schools of "Fe y Alegría" are part of a system of schools under the direction and sponsorship of the Jesuits. They exist in many countries and always in the poorest and most marginalized areas. Their objective is to offer an education in Christian values. I am working with the Presentation Sisters and am truly grateful for this opportunity to be in this school and with these people.

It is in our efforts to educate, in whatever way, that we are affirmed over and over again in our mission to teach Christian living. Formally or informally, facilitating learning, discovering new truths, leading even the smallest to the freedom and delight that comes from broadening horizons is the grace we have been given. We are in that unique position of being both students and teachers in a universe that is diverse and at the same times belongs to everyone.

Kathy, Sue and I continue to walk with our people, discovering together the miracle of the Gospel message and the transforming power of love. We are always surprised by what we are learning: another celebration, another dance, another group of people. Each turn in the road presents a new picture: another village, another brook of running water, another clump of trees to contemplate and admire.

Yuli

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