

THE PERUVIAN JOURNAL



By Sister Sue Scharfenberger

Still within this week of alleluias, we wish you Easter LIFE, the kind that allows us to stop and take notice of the little things and celebrate them together.

Easter brought its unique combination of suffering and celebration. Having waited almost two years since the return of Fujimori, and after months of trials and news of the details, our former president was finally convicted for the deaths of the massacres in Barrios Altos (an old part of Lima) and the Cantuta (where University students along with their professor were also massacred).

It was painful to relive the details of those deaths and many more along with disappearances and tortures. But there was peace for the families who, after 17 years, finally could bring to rest the long struggle to defend their loved ones who were killed at the hands of the president of the country.

You no doubt have read some of the details of these news stories. Suffice it to say that the team of judges proceeded very professionally, noting every detail, so they could not be accused of being bought in the decision.

We believe that in many ways this is international news, giving an example to other countries that dictators who sell their country to terror and violence can be tried and convicted. We believe the role that Chile played in extraditing Fujimori is in some way a recompense for what did not happen in the judgment of Pinochet.

Fujimori was sentenced to 25 years in prison for these atrocities. He still is to be tried for selling the country with the help of Montesinos and moving hundreds of thousands of dollars out of the country.

And all of this was in Holy Week, where the passion and death of one who came to free us was remembered and celebrated.

Here in Muquiyauyo, as in many parts of the Sierra, Holy Week is celebrated in great detail, reliving the last moments of Jesus' life. For years the people have organized the activities of Holy Week, with all the processions, with all the rituals that have outlived any contemporary catechesis.

For us it was a learning experience. It was difficult to know who was doing what, and that was a challenge for ourselves who like to have great solemnity, prayerfulness, and devotion surrounding the Holy Week events. It was difficult also when some of our own faith practices and customs, having been celebrated in other communities for years, had to be put aside in order to learn from the traditions of the people.

One of the moving events of the week is when the statue of Jesus suffering is carried on a large bier (approximately eight men are needed to carry the bier) in procession and that of the Sorrowful Mother as well. They move in different directions led by the corresponding religious societies. Then they come together and meet, offering a gesture of reverence and compassion.

Most of these traditions have been in practice for many, many years. It is the way the people maintained their faith through the imagery of statues, rituals, devotions, etc. In some ways it reflects the absence of priests in the community after the colonial "evangelization", where the people needed to depend on their memory of what was heard from a different interpretation of the Scriptures.

We remembered each of you during this time, knowing that our contemplating and celebrating together the greatest mysteries of our lives is what enables us to be in a sacramental relationship one with another.

Easter blessings to all of you!

Kathy, Yuli, Sue