



THE PERUVIAN JOURNAL

Sister Carol Reamer, a Toledo OSU, is working with Sisters Sue Scharfenberger, Kathy Neely, Yuli Oncihuay in Peru. Sister Carole wrote the following article for her congregation's newsletter. In it, she shares her thoughts on the Ursuline Sisters' efforts in Peru and how the groups work together. This letter was written in late August. We'll return with letters from Sisters Sue, Kathy, and Yuli in our October edition of OURS.

Dear Sisters,

Here in Peru I have the pleasure of Kathy's company for a couple of days in Callao. She has been invited to attend the blessing of the first stone tomorrow (similar to cornerstone) of the new center for the Handicapped in San Miguel, Cajamarca, our former mission in the northern Andes. She played a major part in helping the Committee get to this point, writing letters, calling agencies, visiting offices, helping to investigate the help available and to search out the people and families that need services. It's been a long time coming, so a celebration is in order. She leaves on an all night bus this afternoon.

Since my return to Peru about six weeks ago, the sound of politicians on loud-speakers tied to trucks or cars, their followers pounding the pavement, going door to door begging residents to come outside to meet the candidates, and loud music and singing of theme songs continues. Our elections for mayor are Oct. 3, but with 10 candidates in our district alone, the competition is severe. Add to that the fact that everyone has to vote for two mayors. In our case, we choose a mayor of Carmen de la Legua-Reynoso, our district, and another for Callao, our metropolitan

province. It's like a mayor for Sylvania and another for Toledo – or a mayor for Shively and another for Louisville. Our presidential elections are in April 2011 with another list of about 30 candidates for president.

Tonight we are hosting the monthly Zone meeting. This is a support group of nearby church friends. We have chosen the theme of Corruption in Politics. It's timely and so obvious. There is a group called Transparency that many are involved in. It is an independent oversight group, especially busy at election time. But they are overwhelmed by such values as "the end justifies the means". Hopefully we'll find some ways through brainstorming tonight to help put some new ideas out there to try to get people to think differently.

The people in the south continue suffering from the cold. Forty thousand families who lost their homes in the August 15, 2007 earthquake have yet to receive any kind of aid to rebuild their houses. They continue to live in woven mat huts or in the ruins of their former homes. The temperatures at night are ranging from the upper 20s to the 40s. No one has heating, but imagine the winds cruising through the makeshift shelters or tents. There have been various groups, including our kids at St. Angela Merici School here in Callao, collecting warm clothes to send down. I recently read that 15 of our 21 states are having extraordinarily harsh winters. So many collections have been made that people are about out of extra coats, pants, and sweaters to send. The number of deaths due to cold, pneumonia, etc. are some of the highest on record.

The big news this week is Lori Berenson, a North American who has spent more than 10 years in jail here for terrorism. She was released early on probation with her 15 month old son. (Mothers are allowed to keep their children in prison with them until the child turns

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Sister Yuli Oncihuay with her pupils.

3 years old.) It turns out that the judge who signed her release did not sign one last paper, verifying her place of residence. She voluntarily turned herself in. Now a tribunal court will do it and decide if she can continue on probation or has to complete her sentence of 5 more years in prison.

Yuli and Rocío are hunkered down in Muquiyauyo after teaching each day, studying hard for the teachers' exam they have to take soon. The education system here is very different from ours. They both passed this exam last year, but they have to retake it every year until they receive tenure. There are more teachers than jobs with tenure, so they receive contracts one year at a time, if they can find openings. Again the politics and bribes abound.

Love, Carol