

Peruvian Journal

“Oro, Plata, Cobre y Cajamarca sigue pobre.” (Gold, Silver, Copper and Cajamarca continues to be Poor.) is one of the two principal shouts of the people, as they walk in the marches in the different cities of Peru and provinces of the Department of Cajamarca. The other cry is “Agua no Oro.” (Water Not Gold).

For months now, there has been a major conflict between the people of Cajamarca and the Yanachocha Gold and Copper Mine owned by Newmont, whose headquarters are in Denver, Colorado.

The regional president of Cajamarca, Señor Gregorio Santos, has fought for the healthy lives of his people against the “Conga Project.” In July 2011, when the new president of Peru, Señor Ollanta Humala Tasa, took office, he promised in his acceptance speech to protect the environment and not allow the mines to contaminate the water and the lives of the people in any way. Presently, he is saying that he must respect the agreement made between the former president of Peru and the Newmont Mining Company. However, 64% of the population believe that this has been one of the new president’s greatest errors —not opposing the Conga Project.

Recently, President Humala and his advisors sent two Catholic priests as facilitators between the mining company and the regional president of Cajamarca and his group who support the well-being of the people. As I write this article, the dialogue is still taking place. The saddest part of this conflict is that five people have lost

their lives in the protests and, of course, Señor Santos blames President Humala for these deaths.

Recently, another sad incident occurred. One of the mothers who participated in the parish soup kitchen had a fatal accident as she and her husband were cutting off a huge branch from one of the trees near their home. The branch fell on top of her and she was killed instantly. The young couple has a daughter and a son. Kathy and two women went to their home in the town of Sunuden

to have a prayer service at the wake. The following day, her funeral Mass was held in San Miguel with our church so full of mourners that there was standing room only. Our prayers for Olga Hernandez and her family continue to this day.

On a much lighter note Sue, Yuli, Carol and Kathy have had the anticipated visit of Lee Kirchner, one of our Ursuline Sisters who began our mission in 1964, and worked in Peru for 40 years. As Lee visited in both San Miguel and in Carmen de la Legua, many of the people came to see her throughout the days. The stories and the laughter flowed easily among us all. While Lee was visiting in Carmen de la Legua, the mayor, Señor Daniel Lecca,

a former student of our school, Santa Angela Merici, presented Lee with a medal and a scroll (photos at left).

While Lee was in San Miguel, she made the annual retreat with Kathy and our associates. Those on the retreat contracted a mini-van and 22 of us rode to one of the smaller towns about an hour from San Miguel, called Jangalá. The small church there is built on a hill with many steps leading to the Lord of the Ascension Chapel. Saint Angela Merici was very present to us in a special way that day.



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On July 4th Yuli, Lee, Carol, Sue, and Kathy planned a day together. Sue often facilitates meetings for the Mercy Sisters in Lima. They kindly lent us their home for a break in our routine and to be able to celebrate Independence Day, placing our American flag in the center of the table and waving red, white and blue balloons as we smiled broadly for the photo (at right).

Our Peru Community was given another special gift by being able to participate in our Ursuline Sister Community Days in Louisville by way of the Internet! With "GoToMeeting.Com" we were able to be present for the three days of meetings for which we are truly grateful.

As I finish this article, our support group for the handicapped is planning its first therapy sessions in the three rooms of the Rehabilitation Center for the Handicapped of San Miguel. A speech/hearing/language therapist and a physical therapist are coming from Trujillo the first week of August to do evaluations for the special needs persons on our list. At this same time, the members of the technical area of the mayor's office will be working on the fence for the Rehab Center that will allow far greater security for the property, for the materials and for all who will be using the facility.

We Ursulines and the Peruvian people with whom we work and serve are eternally grateful to each of you for your prayers and support of our mission. You, and your loved ones, have our daily prayers always.

With love and gratitude,
Kathy, Carol, Sue and Yuli

The Ursuline Associates in Peru sent back with Sister Lee a handmade card reminding the Louisville Associates of their "friendship and prayers despite the distance."



From left, Sisters Sue, Kathy, Carol, Lee, and Yuli.

