

Peruvian Journal

Dear Sisters, Associates and Friends,

We want to share with you a little about what is happening in our country, and will begin by telling you about the teachers' strike that began the 5th of September and continues still today (October 2012). The motive for the strike is that the teachers are asking that they be paid the debt that has accumulated over 20 years since the first government of former Peruvian President, Alberto Fujimori, suspended the pay raise and froze some benefits. Another demand is that teachers be compensated when there is an absence because of a death or funeral. And the third demand is a 30% benefit taking into account class preparation. (At present teachers are paid for 30 hours of work which includes only the hours in the classroom.) Many teachers today are on yearly contracts that do not offer job stability or provide full benefits.

The prolonged teachers' strike brings with it the loss of classes in primary and secondary education where thousands of children and youth run the risk of losing the school year.

We have private and public schools in Peru. And the schools most affected are those of the state—the public schools. For this reason, not all of the teachers participate in the strike for a common cause. There are divisions because some look for their own personal, social and political interests and do not take into account the educational needs of the country.

The other concern is that the hospitals and public health clinics are also on strike due to the lack of beds, instruments for operations, medicines, and respect for human dignity in these institutions. And at the



same time, the doctors and others in the medical profession are asking for an increase in salaries. To illustrate: can you imagine going into an

operating room without doctors? Or, being a mother who is to give birth and there is no one to attend to you in the hospital? This reality is very difficult for many people who are sick and cannot be treated.

History of a Holy Woman

Pilar Coll (right) was a great woman, a great fighter for life and for peace, a defender of human rights, and a woman who knew how to remain standing during violent times in our country.



Pilar died on the 15th of September at the age of 83 years. She was a member of the Institute for Secular Missionaries. She showed much empathy for others and was able to understand their feelings and to read them emotionally. This capacity to experience the suffering of others as her own also confirmed her conviction as a true Christian. She firmly believed that all men and women were created in the image and likeness of God and possessed an imminent dignity that must be respected, protected, and promoted, regardless of color, belief, ideology, or actions. She was committed profoundly to the search for justice and she defended the rights of thousands of prisoners, including those who were tortured, killed or disappeared.

Pilar visited our parish in Carmen de la Legua on several occasions, each time sharing with us the strength of her commitment and motivating others to do the same.

Pilar was affectionately called a "Peruanita," a little Peruvian who remained Peruvian until the very end, even requesting that her physical remains be mixed with Peruvian soil. As others have said, "if there is a Heaven, Pilar is there whispering to God the things that still need to be done on earth." Pilar will be missed, but as with many of our unrecognized saints, she is truly "Presente"!

With love and affection,

Yuli, Kathy, Sue, and Carol