



**E-BULLETIN #183**

**30-Apr-15**

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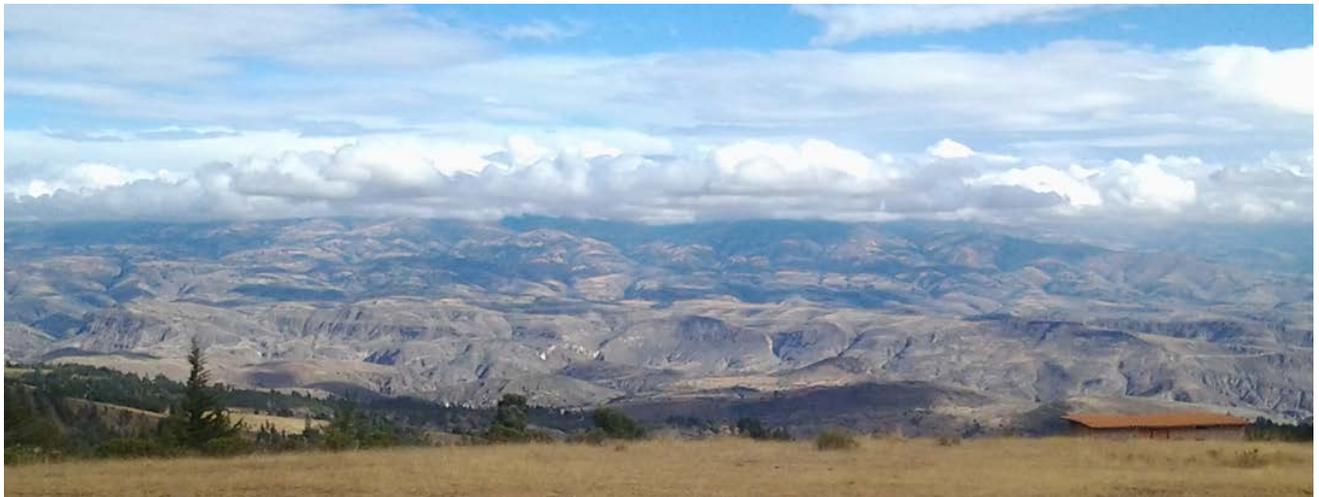
*"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)*

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item 348

## **first impressions in Peru**

Greetings from the hill country of Peru!



After a solemn 'missioning' at the church of San Salvatore in Onda on 04 Aug, we started our long journey the next day to join the new mission of the *Immaculate Conception* Province in Peru. Air France flights from Rome reach Lima on the same day after a 15 hr flight.

On 06 Aug, the feast of the Transfiguration, we visited the remains of two Peruvian saints, **Rosa of Lima** and **Martin de Pores**. We prayed at their tombs for their blessing as we began our mission. That same evening we flew on a small aircraft from Lima to the mountain town of Ayacucho, the centre of what will be our Archdiocese for the years to come. We were welcomed by the Archbishop, Msgr Salvatore Piñeiro, and escorted to his residence for a 2 day stay.

Soon we realised that the Archbishop himself was an extraordinary pastor and father! He reminded us of Pope Francis – so human, joyful, caring, pastoral and spiritual. As soon as he entered the house, the whole community came alive. His presence radiated the joy of the Gospel.

After two days visiting various places in the town, including two cloistered convents, we left on 08 Aug for our destination, three hours driving accompanied by the Archbishop. The roads were initially good but later became muddy. The country seemed to be composed only of huge mountains, reminding us of our north eastern States in India, at the foot of the Himalayas. Driving on the narrow hilly mountain roads was a tricky and dangerous business, with very little margin for error! We soon realised that this would become a challenge in the future [and we seek your prayers!]. The landscape was amazingly beautiful.



After three hours we reached the convent of the Mexican sisters. This is going to be our community until 30 Aug when we hope to shift to our own community. After refreshing ourselves, the Archbishop celebrated Mass for the parish community. He and the people welcomed us. Soon traditional musicians arrived to add to the welcome. Dancing and music followed, accompanied by a lot of beer and traditional alcoholic drinks. A feast was on! This was the official beginning of our mission in Peru.

The coming days will be dedicated to learning Spanish. The climate has been severely cold, touching 2°C. Without heating in the house, we can only protect ourselves with as many woollen clothes as possible. This is an area as much as 3300 meters above sea level and hence we must expect this..

Peru has a population of about 130 million people, of which 89% are Catholics. The Pallottines have the care of the parish at Vilcashuaman covering a huge geographical area, with around 80 communities spread over the mountains. It is being looked after by just two priests from the *Sao Paolo* Province. These young priests are genuine missionaries and we were deeply impressed by their zeal and commitment. We have come to help them pastorally.

There are a lot of pious devotions, and feasts are celebrated with great pomp. However there is a pressing need for deeper faith formation. As elsewhere, families suffer from various social problems. We witnessed the marriage of a couple with their two children assisting. But better late than never! In another celebration, 14 persons were baptised across the ages of 3 to 60. So it is clear that there are plenty of pastoral challenges ahead.



Of course we are not sure of all that lies ahead of us. And no doubt it is not going to be easy. The days could be long, the solitude could be unbearable and the long journeys on the mountain roads dangerous. Perhaps these experiences will teach us to rely more on God. It will certainly show us what it means to go to the peripheries, as Pope Francis challenges us!

Meanwhile, we remain grateful to God, to the Archbishop and the Pallottines for giving us this opportunity. May God be gloried and the gospel be served!

**Cenacle Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus –  
Ayacucho – PERU**

**20.08.15**

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item 349

**meet the nun on a bicycle who is changing the world**



**a humble Catholic nun on a bicycle is single-handedly changing the lives of former sex slaves and rape survivors in the Democratic Republic of Congo.**

You don't need much to change the world - just a bicycle, loaves of bread and a huge smile.

For more than a decade Catholic nun **Sister Angelique Namaika** has helped thousands of women and girls who have been kidnapped, raped and kept as sex slaves by the Lords Resistance Army in the north east region of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The winner of the UN refugee agency's top humanitarian award is on a two week tour of Australia to thank donors for supporting her healing and rehabilitation work and raise awareness about gender violence. Between 2009-14 she helped 2,000 women on her own, with the aid of her trusty bicycle and meagre resources, but last year with UNHCR fundraising she was able to expand her activities and assisted almost 3000 women.

"Very often as a human I am overwhelmed (by the women's stories) but I pray to God to help me continue," Sister Angelique told a UNHCR lunch in Canberra this week through a French interpreter.

One of the women she helped was just 13-years-old when she was abducted, raped and then gave birth to two children while rebels kept her in captivity for five years.

Sister Angelique refuses to allow the women to be passive victims and helps them develop livelihood skills. Sewing groups, farm training and bakery businesses have given the women a way to earn money and overcome community stigma about rape, she said.



Literacy classes are helping some of the women to get an education to go on to train as teachers, nurses and midwives.

**Factbox:**

**Democratic Republic of Congo**

- 2.7 million internally displaced people
- 430,000 refugees in neighbouring countries of Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.
- 350 rapes reported every week on average - only a fraction of the true number.
- Rwandan-backed M23 armed group responsible for war summary executions, recruitment of child soldiers and rape.
- Lord's Resistance Army, a Ugandan rebel group with a long record of atrocities, continues to attack civilians in the north east.

20.08.15

Source: UNHCR and Human Rights Watch

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**on #182**