

31 October 2007

Dear Marianist Family,

On the evening of August 15, 2007 an earthquake over 7.0 on the Richter scale struck Southern Peru for a terrifying 3 minutes. Two weeks earlier I had arrived in Lima for a year of ministry at our Marianist technical school. I had never experienced an earthquake before, so it was a rather frightening experience for me personally. While there was no major destruction in the area where I am living, we certainly did feel the quake. In the days that followed we learned of the devastation that occurred in the southern provinces of the country and of the enormous death toll and injuries. I began to wonder how could we as a Marianist Family respond to this need of our brothers and sisters who now suffer as a result of this natural disaster. The irony of this situation is that the majority of those impacted had few financial resources before the earthquake and now have even fewer.

During the first weekend of October, some two months after the earthquake, I traveled with other members of the Marianist community here in Peru to the cities of Ica and Chincha to see the destruction and to find out how we might be able to assist in the reconstruction efforts. While there was a visible presence of the relief agencies, there was little activity on the part of the government to begin reconstruction. A fund as been created by the government to aid families with the reconstruction of their homes, but there has been no distribution of these monies as of today. The latest news is that there is now a fight among politicians about the management of the fund.

I am writing you to request your financial assistance in aiding these families. The Marianist in Peru have established a relationship with the parish of Cristo Rey in the city of Chincha to assist members of their parish community in operating communal kitchens and in the construction of prefabricated wood houses to provide temporary shelter. Attached is a letter from the pastor of the parish, Padre Carloman Gonzalas Vargas, OMI, he and other members of his religious community, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, having been working diligently to assist families. This letter details the situation just within their parish boundaries (a rather large area) and their current needs. In addition I have attached some personal photos that I took of the destruction and of the prefabricated houses.



Parroquia Cristo Rey

Diócesis de Ica



“SOLIDARITY IS THE KEY TO HOPE AND THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE SOUTH OF PERU”

Thursday, October 18, 2007

Dear brothers,

We send you our fraternal greetings in the name of the whole community of the parish of Christ the King. As members of the church and the parish, we have a Christian, moral and social commitment to give support and immediate attention to our brothers affected by the earthquake which has devastated the people of our province of Chincha.

According to the latest information of the National Institute of Statistics (INEI), in our Province the numbers are as follows:

Homes destroyed.....	17,708
Homes seriously damaged	6,891
Total number of homes.....	24,799
Number of people in homes destroyed.....	86,902
Number of people in damaged homes.....	21,506
Total number off people affected.....	108,408

Our parish (Cristo Rey) attends a population of approximately 70,000 people who live in four Districts: Pueblo Nuevo, which is on the coast and has a population of 60,000, and three rural Districts in the high Andes (San Juan de Yanac, San Pedro de Huarcapana; and Chavin). Seventy percent of the people were seriously affected since they belong to the lower income level and had built their homes with adobe (mud bricks) resulting in the collapsing of their homes and the loss of their belongings, and forcing them to sleep on the streets thus risking the health and security especially of the children, elderly, and the handicapped.

Our main church was severely damaged as well as 10 of our chapels in different sectors of the parish, The liturgy is being celebrated in the parish hall, and in ten of the Sectors it is celebrated outdoors.

The parish of Cristo Rey is divided into 17 Sectors, including the three rural Districts. This enables us to distribute the supplies we receive in an orderly and

just way so that the immediate needs of our people such as: food, clothing, blankets, and medicine are met. The families most affected by the earthquake have priority.

Regarding the distribution of food, families are grouped around emergency “community kitchens” (ollas communes) and “soup kitchens” (comedores). The community kitchens, or, literally “common pots” are smaller groups of 90 to 100 people that share their food and cooking utensils. The Soup Kitchens are larger groups with a minimum of 200 people. We have 60 Soup Kitchens and 100 Community Kitchens, or approximately 22,000 people being provided with food on a daily basis. Different institutions donate the food.

We have likewise coordinated with different professionals in the field of health through our parish Health Center, providing free medicines and medical attention for those in need.

As members of the Church and the parish, we are very concerned about the living conditions of families that are still living on the streets in rustic shacks made of plastic or matted bamboo that provide no security nor protection from the cold, heat or drizzle. Until now, the government has done very little to solve this problem. We are also concerned about the reconstruction of our main church and chapels needed for the pastoral work.

The supplies that we are distributing to those affected by the earthquake is not enough. Although the donations are decreasing, we feel the need to continue this work.

We have many needs, but we give priority to the following.

THE NEED OF FOOD FOR THE SOUP KITCHENS

It costs S. /1,263 Peruvian New Soles to provide one Soup Kitchen for one week, or S/5,415.43 for 30 days.

PREFABRICATED WOOD HOUSES

These are needed for families still living on the streets in extreme poverty since the earthquake. Their situation is precarious. Many of them are elderly, handicapped, orphans, or unwed mothers with several children, and it is unlikely that the government will help them in the near future even though they need attention immediately. We propose prefabricated houses as a solution to this urgent need. Here is a description and cost estimate of the houses.

Constructed area: 20 square meters (5 x 4), two rooms

Cost: S/.1,200.00

Immediate help needed

200 families are living in very precarious situations. Their health and security are at risk.

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PARISH CHURCH AND 10 CHAPELS


The evangelization and the sacramental life are very important, especially in these difficult times in which we are living, in order to maintain the hope and unity of our community.

Before the earthquake, many groups of children, adolescents, teenagers, adults and elderly people met in the parish and in the sectors. Our main objective is to "go to **everyone**, give them **all the dimensions** of the gospel, and get **everyone** involved.. The earthquake severely damaged the main church, 10 of the chapels and several meeting rooms, and so we consider it a priority to rebuild or repair these buildings in order to continue the work of evangelizing. We have been blessed with the work of many volunteers, and one religious institution has taken on the task of repairing the main church. We still need help to pay for the labor and for the construction materials involved in the reconstruction of the ten chapels..

We have described some of our work and needs in the hope that you will be able to support us in any of these priorities as you see fit. We thank you very sincerely and we lift up our prayers to God and the Blessed Virgin asking them to bless you abundantly so that you can carry on your noble work in favor of the poorest people.

Fraternally in Jesus and Mary,




P. CARLOMAN GONZALES VARGAS O.M.I.
Párroco de Cristo Rey

Email: pxtoreych@hotmail.com; carloomi@hotmail.com

Av. Oscar R. Benavides N° 605 Telf. (056) 261236 Telefax (056) 265507 - Pueblo Nuevo - Chíncha
Dirección Correos: Casilla N° 86 - Chíncha Alta - Perú

Contributions of any size would be appreciated and can be sent to the Provincial offices in St. Louis to: Bro. Joseph Markel, S.M., Peruvian Earthquake Victims Fund, 4425 West Pine Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63108

Questions about the fund can be directed to Myles McCabe, director of Peace and Justice (mmcabe@sm-usa.org) or to Bro. Brian Halderman, S.M. (bhalderman@marianists.us)

Mary, our Mother, guide our efforts to assist our brothers and sisters in need!

Gratefully,

Bro. Brian Halderman. S.M.

PERU EARTHQUAKE DAMAGE



A \$200 donation will cover the cost of a temporary shelter for homeless families

