

Earthquake in Perú

It is a world news. In the evening of Wednesday, 15th August, on the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady at 8.00 P.M (local time) Perú suffered an earthquake of 7.9 grades of Richter scale. It is, in fact, a seismic movement of high magnitude that happens almost in a period of 10/15 years in the less developed Andes regions of South America. They feared also a seaquake with those effects of the Asiatic Tsunami of 26th December 2004. Luckily the sea remained calm. But thousands died in this natural calamity. In the days to come the number may still increase. It is a national catastrophe. The affected areas lack light, electricity, telephone, water, medicine and beds. So many houses were destroyed and buildings collapsed on the streets and hospitals are full of casualties,...

Even if we do not have complete information about it due to the interruption of telephone connection, we desire to give these initial information to the Order. We received some information from Fr.Luis Edgardo Pinto Tipismana, the Regional Vicar of Perú. By the grace of God there was no serious harm to our Friars and Nuns. While Fr. José Gutiérrez was celebrating Holy Mass in Pisco, the Church collapsed and 10 persons were buried inside. But our confrere was saved at the altar with some wounds on the hands which required 14 stitches in the hospital. The morale of the Peruvian Carmel is good: they pray and cry with those who are suffering and assist the people.

The material loss has been great. The tower of Our Church of St Joseph in Lima is damaged. A narrow road that leads to our Friars in Lima-El Cercado having an ancient Church of 'Santo Cristo' is blocked. The major loss is reported in Ica, both in the monastery of the Carmelite nuns and in the house of Friars and the Shrine of Christ of Luren. According to the initial information, we come to know that the main tower above the entrance of the Sanctuary fell destroying also the dome. With the tremor also fell the statues except that of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and of 'Venerated Christ'. This fact is considered miraculous. The 4 small towers of the façade also fell over the parking area. Some doors of the Church and the wall of the monastery were also damaged. The adjoining photo shows the present condition of the Shrine and the surroundings. The same happened in the monastery of nuns. Still small tremors are causing panic among the people.

Finally, these days of absence of communication, the Discalced Carmelite Nuns of San Vicente de Cañete, the place of the great disasters, describe the loss they suffered. A part of the external wall and the dividing wall of the monastery collapsed. In the Church, the statue of St.John of the Cross broke. The water tank installed on the terrace broke and flooded the monastery. They experienced tremendous moments of panic. Many families of our Sisters and Friars have suffered serious consequences of the seismic movement.

The Peruvian Carmel has mobilised themselves to extend urgent help to the local people. The needs of those who suffered are many. At this moment the Governments and the Red Cross of different Countries and other international organisations are co-ordinating their resources to alleviate the grave catastrophe of the earthquake.

The Secretary of the Missions of the General House offers willingly his services to forward the helps that the communities of Our Order would like to send to the Peruvian Carmel. We wish to help them rebuild their damaged Houses and extend possible helps to the people in need who surround them. The helps will be forwarded for the reconstruction of the destroyed buildings, to assist the families affected, those wounded and those who died, ... Let us show our generosity towards those affected by the tragedy of Perú.