



# Mission Peru with Maryknoll

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I “crossed borders” to fulfill my dream of being a missionary, abroad. It was also a great opportunity to learn about the options for religious vocation and see the church in remote areas of the world. In April 2009, I completed a three-month mission in Puno, Peru which is located in the high Andes mountain region, bordering with Bolivia.

The opportunities while on mission were many, and I was glad to work with many great missionaries. At the university in Puno, with Maryknoll campus ministry, I presented English language classes, put together a leadership workshop, and had regular groups for Bible study, spirituality and church teaching. I learned so much from the students!

Most exciting was the work with university volunteers on the coordination of a summer school for a small community of mostly Aymara people who live on the shores of Lake Titicaca which was immense and sapphire blue.

The local people completely opened their hearts to me. Their hearts had no borders! The first day, they welcomed me with a hug and made it very easy for me to learn and adjust to the culture.

The personal and spiritual borders I crossed were to listen better and yield to the interests and ideas of the other. Sometimes to serve simply means accompanying people and letting them lead. I learned the value of silence and attentive listening. Self-sacrifice is difficult. It challenges us to deeper prayer and spiritual life. On mission, I relied on prayer and reflection to make wise choices.

Jesus has always been with me, modeling the love that leads me. It is his example, and the lives of the saints, that paved the way for my life. To go on mission, I had to quit a good job, give up a nice apartment, be humble and ask my friends to store my belongings. It was challenging to upend my life, but I knew Jesus was with me. Being a missionary is an experience I will never forget. I would do it again.

– Manuel Esteban