

# Peru's quake victims wait for relief efforts

SORITOR, Peru (CNS) — Nearly 48 hours after an earthquake rocked the Amazon region of northern Peru, stunned survivors complained bitterly that the government had offered no help and that they were counting on the Catholic Church and pro-Cuban guerrillas to provide relief.

Survivors said they were relying on a small amount of food and medicine that had come from the church in the Territorial Prelature of Moyobamba, in the nearby provincial capital.

Civil-defense officials counted the bodies of 101 people after the 48-second quake measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale rattled the area late May 29, marking the first of an unusual series of quakes that shook such nations as Romania and Japan.

Scores of people remained missing in remote hamlets, where roads were cut off by landslides and fallen trees. The U.N. Disaster Relief Office in Lima put the unofficial death toll at 200.

Survivors slept in rice paddies and groves of mango tree outside the ruins of what was once the farming town of Soritor.

No tents and only a few boxes of food and medicines had arrived, residents said.

The villagers used shovels and their bare hands to dig for belongings in the rubble of their mud-brick homes.

Some residents said they hoped the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement, pro-Cuban guerrillas who appeared to enjoy wide support in the town, would bring aid because, as one villager said, "the government pays no attention to us."

Soritor residents carried candles and flowers down rubble-strewn streets in a mass funeral procession for the town's 27 victims.

"We wait and wait, but the civil defense comes only with empty hands and promises," Buenaventura Bocanegra said after he and his tearful wife, Aurora, buried their two daughters.

"We sleep in the orchards. We've lost everything," he said.

Others wept as they recalled the earthquake and contemplated what was left of



AP/Wide World Photos Residents of Rioga, a town in the jungle of northern Peru, retrieve their belongings May 30 after an earthquake rocked the region late Tuesday.

their town of 5,000 people.

"Everything started shaking, all the lights went out, and suddenly everything collapsed. Then all I could hear were cries and groans," said Eulalio Marujo, whose mud-brick home collapsed.

Almost no building was left intact by the quake, and townspeople used ropes to pull

down shaky walls and dangling roofs before aftershocks or a heavy rain could topple them.

Civil-defense groups and a flurry of politicians who toured the quake zone promising aid had brought nothing, residents said. Among those who arrived empty-handed was presidential candidate Mario Vargas Llosa's wife, Patricia, residents said.

# Pro-choice stance leads N.J. governor to quit Knights

By Jerry Filteau  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Gov. James J. Florio of New Jersey announced May 31 that he has resigned from the Knights of Columbus because his abortion-rights position may discomfit fellow Knights.

He sent in his resignation May 19, the day after Bishop James T. McHugh of Camden, N.J., speaking to the New Jersey state convention of the Knights, said it was an "embarrassment" that "some of those in public life who reject or compromise church teaching (on abortion) claim membership in the Knights."

Florio is from Camden County. He was a member of the Knights' Council #6247 in Pitman, southeast of Camden, for the past

11 years.

Bishop McHugh told Catholic News Service June 1 that he understood that Florio's resignation from the Knights resulted not from his speech but from previous "feedback from some Knights" who had privately urged him to drop his membership.

Russell Shaw, Washington-based national director of public information for the Knights, declined any specific comment on Florio's decision, but told CNS the general policy of the Knights is that membership is open to any man who is "a practicing Catholic."

He said because the Knights of Columbus "is a profoundly and unqualifiedly pro-life organization," it would seem

"contradictory" for someone "to be pro-choice and a member."

The leadership of the Knights would hope that any member who supports legal abortion "either change his position or resign," he said.

At the same time, the Knights do not have a policy of expelling such members, he said, although some "right-wing" anti-abortion groups have been pressuring them to do so during the past year.

"As a lay organization, the K of C does not have the authority, competence or right to determine who is a practicing Catholic," he said.

That right belongs to the church's pastoral authorities, he added, and "unless and until the church's pastoral leaders take the position that one cannot be pro-choice and be considered a practicing Catholic, it is not appropriate for the K of C to take that position unilaterally."

Bishop McHugh said in a telephone interview that his speech to the Knights "was not directed to Florio. In fact, he was not prominently in my mind."

The bishop mentioned no names in his talk, but a number of newspapers and wire services noted that Florio, the state's most

prominent Catholic politician, was a Knight.

Florio's advocacy of abortion rights figured strongly in his election campaign last fall as the Democratic candidate for governor.

He underscored that position when he told reporters at the State House May 31 that he had quit the Knights. "The most important thing is that I happen to think that everyone has the right to express his opinion," he said. "My view is that a woman has the right to choose."

In his May 18 speech Bishop McHugh outlined a planned Camden diocesan policy to bar "pro-choice" public figures from receiving any honors or awards from Catholic institutions, from holding parish or diocesan ministries or offices, and from being featured speakers at any church-sponsored event.

"The pro-life commitment and activities of the Knights of Columbus are well known nationally and locally," he said. "For any Knight to take a position contrary to that of the church is an embarrassment, and some have called on the Knights to expel these recalcitrant members."

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