The Republic of Peru is located in western South America. It shares borders with Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Bolivia, and Chile. Peru covers an area that is slightly smaller than Alaska, the largest U.S. state. Its population is about 40 times the size of that state’s! The capital city of Peru is Lima.

Christian faith was introduced by missionaries when the Spanish arrived to colonize Peru in the 16th century.

Peru’s culture has been formed by a mix of ethnicities over a period of many hundreds of years. Indigenous tribes, like the Quechua (say Keh-chew-uh) trace their roots back thousands of years. Their language is the second most spoken one in Peru after Spanish. Spanish colonists mixed with the native Quechua and later, with people who arrived from Africa and Europe to create the music, literature, and way of life we call “modern Peruvian.”

Although education is free and compulsory in Peru, many children drop out early to work to help support their families. It is estimated that 25 -35% of Peruvian children aged 6-14 work every day, many in hazardous jobs, like mining or construction.

Although over three-quarters of all houses have running water, it is not necessarily drinkable. While most people in the city (about 75%) have access to indoor plumbing, many people who live in the rural areas do not.
MCA in Peru

When children have to drink dirty water, they are exposed to many water borne diseases. When they become ill, there is little medical care. Peru currently has one trained doctor for about every 1,000 people compared with more than double that amount in the United States.

The capital city of Lima accounts for about a third of all of Peru’s population. Many of the residents are living in shanty towns built on mountains of sand that surround the city. Some people from the mountains and the jungle areas of Peru come to Lima looking for better education for the children and better employment opportunities for themselves. The locals refer to them as “invasions”.

Other Peruvians stay in the rural areas and do their best to create a life for their families. Such is the case for the population of Santa Clotilde—known as The City of Friendship—along the River Napo, deep in the Amazon region of northern Peru. The town is reachable only by boat from the city of Iquitos, Peru. Travel along the river is difficult so trips are infrequent. Education and medical care are hard to come by if not for the efforts of Catholic missionaries. Between 1951 and 1991, The Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Angels from Quebec served as nurses and in the 1980’s two priests who were also doctors joined them. They built a small clinic that is now staffed by volunteer medical lay people.

They also started a school, Colegio Lugape (which is short for Colegio Lucille Gagne Pellerin, one of the original missionary Sisters loved by the town), which educates over 1,500 students a year from Santa Clotilde as well as the surrounding villages of the very large area. Colegio Lugape is now led by the Sister Servants of the Sacrament of Jesus from Mexico. They teach boys and girls to read, write, and do math. They have chess lessons, too!

Most importantly, the students are learning how much God loves them and that they have a mission in life to use the talents God gave them and be their best selves. The Sisters—with help from the Missionary Childhood Association—are helping the students understand what those talents are.

At last report, Missionary Childhood (MCA) members from around the world sacrificed $8,000 for the fellow MCA members at the Colegio Lucille Gagne Pellerin.