

Testimonios de una vida pastoral en el Perú

INTRODUCTION

Pierre De Guchteneere is 97 years old and the eldest of a Belgian family of ten children. His father, my grandfather, was a physician with an excellent reputation in Brussels and in the provinces. From his father, Pierre inherited an exceptional intelligence while from his mother, my grandmother, he inherited a prodigious memory that continues to amaze us. My mother is the fifth in the family and the younger sister was born during the Second World War, when Pierre was 17 years old. My grandmother gave birth to her last daughter when her eldest son was entering the seminary.

Most of the family remained in Belgium when Pierre ventured to Peru in 1964, leaving his parents and large family behind, gradually replacing his name with Pedro. This indicated his good adaptation to the new country that welcomed him warmly and where he decided to stay. He used to return to Europe every two years, part of the time in Belgium and part in various countries to visit his numerous contacts and friends. Family reunions were organized to pay tribute to the child back from afar, and the one I still remember is for the golden wedding anniversary of my grandparents, in 1976, when we gathered the almost 50 members of the direct family line.

In January 2002, I met Pedro again during a trip to Peru: 'la sobrina' as my uncle calls, arrived on New Year's Day at Tres Compuertas where the door opened to an unknown and welcoming world. It marked the beginning of a beautiful relationship with Pedro and Luis Fernando, with frequent visits to Lima and traveling with Pedro through several Peruvian regions: we visited cities on the coast, in the highlands and in the jungle, where Pedro's friends were waiting for us. I discovered Peru through its people, observing the complexity of contrasts, which never cease to amaze me.

In Pedro's environment, beautiful friendships were woven and I specially remember Maria-Elena Chamochumbi, a faithful friend who visited Pedro and Luis Fernando frequently. For years, and until her untimely death end of 2021, Maria-Elena offered her unconditional affection to my uncle and we remember her fondly; she would have loved this project!

We shared the Covid at the beginning of 2022, when Luis Fernando became so ill that we thought he would not come out of it: what a pleasure it was to see him slowly recover from the illness thanks to an excellent medical support, frequent visits and the prayers of the great community that accompanies Pedro and Luis Fernando.

Thanks to my uncle, I have a better understanding of the family environment in which my parents grew up because Pedro knew my paternal family well before and after my father's marriage to one of his sisters. Pedro shared anecdotes of his family life from his youth in Belgium, during World War II, the post-war and his departure to Peru. It is a privilege to listen to a historian tell accurate stories and I am grateful to have learned so much through his nearly century of experiences recalled thanks to his irreproachable memory.

I am grateful for the photos received that show a range of celebrations and shared moments. They are a juxtaposition of memorable events, in no particular order, where everyone can recognize themselves, although all the photos could not all be included.

On the cover, the photos are of moments shared with Pedro, starting with the San Cristobal hill below, at the foot of which is the Tres Compuertas parish. Just above right, is 18-year-old Pedro with his one-and-a-half-year-old younger sister. To his left are Pedro and Luis

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Fernando with members of the parish. Above the black-and-white photo are all De Guchteneere siblings. Santiago Calle in Chinchá, and above, Fr. Edmundo Alarcon with Pedro in Tres Compuertas in 2024. On the left, Pedro and Fr. Gustavo Gutierrez. Above, Pedro with members of the Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones (CEP) and the Instituto Bartolomé de las Casas (IBC). In the top photo, Pedro and I are standing with our backs to the sunset from a favorite viewpoint in Barranco (photo taken by Maria-Elena in 2020).

The book is divided into six sections, starting with the historical testimonies and followed by the Unecos. Then come the stories of San Juan de Lurigancho, CEP & IBC. The short and more personal stories conclude this tribute, which closes with Rocio's poem, written in 2017 to celebrate Pedro's 90th birthday.

Pedro's kindness is widely acknowledged in this tribute and I would like to thank each participant for their collaboration: the testimonies are reflections of Peruvian and foreign lives scattered around the world that reveal a great affection for Pedro. The range of ages is surprising, from Naiara, 22 years old, who knew Pedro as a child in Tres Compuertas, to Br. Juan, who celebrated his 99th birthday and five decades of friendship with Pedro. Each story is a reality shared with the man whom Rosario calls the "Belgian prophet in Peru".

With gratitude,
Marie-Noëlle Crabbé - De Guchteneere, Barcelona.
