



The unusual career of Marco Acuña

It is a well-known fact that believing in God is something for old women. However, when it comes to Christmas men are also keen on a little bit of spirituality. And of course a church is the ideal location for a marriage ceremony, not to mention the photo opportunities. These are the two reasons why young people suddenly find themselves in a house of God. Once and never again. At one's own funeral one finds oneself again in a church nave, but no longer "actively."

Knock-knock. My office door open and Marcos Acuña comes in. He came just to bid me a good morning, but the brief exchange of greetings turns into a deep conversation. "What was it like back then?" I ask the 29 year-old with my ears pricked.

He loves the cool life. Being a hippie he takes every new day as it comes. In the morning he picks up his guitar, in the evening he knocks back the drugs and at night he has a girl in his bed. Is not that the ideal life?

He knows Abancay's roads like the back of his hand. He has grown used to all sorts of weather and lives in harmony with nature without any obligations or responsibilities. That is the fantastic life.

It has been several years since the young man even opened a book. Reading or even studying is a no-go for his cool lifestyle. But one day it does happen. He takes a Bible into his hands and opens it. The Reina Valera is an old translation in old language. On page one under the title "Genesis" he reads: "In the beginning God created the heavens and earth..." - a sentence which has annoyed atheists and strengthened Christians for centuries.

Marcos starts to understand the first few paragraphs. He reads on and suddenly he is on page three. The hippie who lives on the street is suddenly delving into a new world. Four weeks later he has devoured, internalised and understood the 1,200 pages.

“God loves me!” Incredible. In his joy the ex-junky can even embrace the drunk lying in the gutter. Marcos had never expected that trusting God would suddenly give his life a much deeper meaning.

For four years he studied theology at a seminary in Lima. Since 2015 he travels for Diospi Suyana through many mountainside villages and visits former patients.

“I knock on many doors at exactly the right moment,” he can hardly contain his enthusiasm. “I often speak to people, who at exactly that moment have reached the end point of all their hopes and dreams. It happens so often!”

I nosily inquire: “Do you experience that people turn you away?” “Hardly ever,” answers our travelling-pastor joyfully, “the people welcome me with a lot of respect and treat me in a special way!”

Pointing his thumb upwards he exclaims: “I feel God’s presence in my life. There is nothing better than that!”

Interesting that it is said that believing in God is something for old women. ... once and never again in a house of God. At one’s own funeral one finds oneself again in a church nave, but no longer “actively.” Who is it really who has got hold of the wrong end of the stick? Is it Marcos Acuña or it the enlightened, emancipated, satiated and incredibly clever inhabitants of the Western World? /KDJ