

THE SHOESHINE SPECIAL

NEWS FROM THE WORKING BOYS CENTER • QUITO, ECUADOR • WINTER 2009



DEAR FOLKS, Merry Christmas! The loudest noises are mostly gongs booming and cymbals clanging without love. So shut that out for this moment and listen to the sound of Christmas wherever you are and from here in the Working Boys' Center. The tinkling bell of Christmas has been summoning us for almost two thousand years to look at each other and see why God stays here and will spend 2010 with us. We can celebrate.

One of us, 16 year old Fernando Cunduri, a down syndrome success story who trained in our Center and has been working as a shelf stocker in a supermarket, needed 36 pints of blood for an operation on his heart on November 15th. In our huge family of families, nothing could have been easier than getting thirty six of us with the right blood type to make the time and all the arrangements including the extra bus fare in the week's budget. The doctors did the miracle. Fernando is coming to the Christmas party to thank everybody.

We are into salvation every day. We even make holy the Lord's Sundays building houses with spaces for all kinds of self respect inside them. One by one, the obscene hovels become the disappearing junk piles that were barricading families from each other's gift of prosperity through security and friendship. A welfare program could never do all this and ever so much more that Jesus inspires just by being here.

The five thousand families long since gone from our daily helps to make the changes through meals, job preparations and health care are grateful to the Center and its benefactors. So are the families that are in the process now, grateful as they can be. That impresses Jesus and He is thinking. The date of the end of the world is not published and may not yet be set. So even though it will always be a defined doctrinary end, it just might not happen. Jesus likes all the gratitude here, especially at Christmastime. **THANKS TO YOU. John Halligan, S.J**



We know very well that you deserve our gratitude for your ongoing generosity. And we also know that God knows what is going on. God sees that without your help we will always be poor and unable to be the big help we all want to be to thousands of other families of other working kids who also need the chance to make the big changes to a happy life style as preparation for Heaven. So some of us gathered together to say thanks to you and since you won't hear us even if we shout, we made a sign. Thanks to all and HAVE A BLESSED CHRISTMAS. We will, too. You make it possible.

HE BROUGHT US AN EVERLASTING KINGDOM OF GRATITUDE

Consumerism is not all bad and it is more fun when it is in small change and cast-off stuff. That is the lesson of the Incarnation project. This place was a badly used mess before Jesus was born in that stable. It still would be only that without Him here with us. He shows us all the values in enjoying gratefully all that surrounds us. "Gratefully" is the happy Christmas rhythm Jesus brought back into our universe and into our Working Boys' Center for every one of our days, starting on December 25th.

Our WBC kids are totally with that. They are grateful for the football we had and lost and will not get replaced until investigation proves innocence of or sets conditions on the ball handlers. No problem. Fistfulls of crumpled newspaper, glue, masking tape and they have specialized fun with the new football that shows more self determination about which direction it takes when kicked. Our kids are grateful to the volunteers who taught them to make those paper footballs and teach them to use things well.

Ximena Arias was sitting on the staircase blocking traffic in an intimate conversation with her doll. Madre Miguel Conway, BVM, approached, "What a beautiful doll! What's her name?" Ximena answered very proudly, "Gloria. And I love her." "Did you get Gloria as a Christmas gift?" "No. I found her in the garbage." That makes the bonding between Ximena and Gloria all the more priceless and Ximena all the more grateful that God let her discover, rescue and love Gloria.

In our bakery training store, Madre Cindy Sullivan, BVM, is using nickels to inspire more gratitude all around. The price of an ice cream cone is still twenty cents; and a free squirt of one of six flavors of syrup was optional. But the kids started biting the squirt off the top and opting for another squirt of a different flavor on the same cone. So Cindy said, "A nickel a squirt any flavor any cone," and we are shoveling nickels into trucks for the bank. It is a frozen account, pending investigation of nuns making nickels off kids, by a Papal delegate. Meanwhile, the kids have more fun with nickels than any millionaires ever thought of having. Cindy is incorrigible. A kid without enough for a cone asked her one day, "Don't you have anything else for a nickel?" The result is more trucks going to the bank



"... O GIVE HIM DEVOTION, O GIVE HIM YOUR HEART"



PLAY BALL!



CARL EDWARDS AND THE GIRLS MAKE FROSTING FOR THEIR COOKIES



XIMENA GIVES GLORIA SOME LOVE



ROSA, THE BAKERY MANAGER, CAUGHT SOME OF MADRE CINDY'S HABITS



MARTINA, THE WORKER



with nickels for day-old donuts.

The volunteers running the Girls' Program are not nuns and so will not be investigated for offering the little girls consumption of every sixth cookie after the sale of five. The volunteers want our girls safe off the streets while they learn that God helped everybody discover all about cookies and money. They can sell and make money for their families and for stuff to make more cookies and eat every sixth one. It could be the best and holiest of all this world's invented games.

Martina-on-the-Rocks used to have a real name: Martina Toapanta. You may remember her from a past issue when a "gringa minga" group from a parish in USA came to help her build her house and renamed her for her incredible energy as a fellow construction worker. Anyway, Martina-on-the-Rocks saved up another bundle of money for more construction materials and kept at the house until we were all proud of her showing off the finished palace to some visitors who were astounded at how our folks do so much with so little.

The first graders believe that it is not enough to just say thanks to Jesus for the great gifts He brings us. They believe we should give Jesus something in return. So they have a long-standing custom of giving their hearts to Jesus at Christmastime to show their gratitude. It is a very important ceremony to show Jesus that they are grateful for all the gifts He gives them, especially the one He sees that they get after the ceremony.

All this teaching about gratitude began in that stable. It is on record as having been free emergency lodging. There was no money needed. But the stars travelling the night sky, the animals and the straw and the manger and the cave and its owner and all the other people were very much needed. God made all of that. Why he came was to show us how to have fun imitating Baby Jesus' gratitude for all of that.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT!

Padre's 80th birthday is September, 2010! We will be celebrating at Marquette University on Friday and Saturday, August 13th and 14th. There will be dinner in the Marquette University Union on the 14th, as well as a mass in the Union chapel at 4pm that same day. We have reserved hotel rooms. Plan ahead and mark your calendars!

CENTER'S EDUCATION FOR WORK RECOGNIZED NATIONALLY

On September 24, 2009 we had a party honoring Father Halligan, S.J. for having founded and directed the Working Boys' Center - A Family of Families for 45 years. We had the event in an elegant setting and invited all kinds of important people and reminded them that the Center needs their help. The children sang. The Ecuadorian Jesuit Provincial recognized the Center as a Jesuit work and made a commitment to its future. Carlos Gomez, one of the Center's first members who now is on the the Center's Ecuadorian board of directors, told of his history with "Padre Juan". Then, when we thought we had finished the formalities and could raise our glasses to Father Halligan, two groups surprised us with their gifts.

The first came from loyal friends who unveiled a large original oil painting of Father Halligan. There was talk of building a museum in which to house the painting and the other medals and awards that have been given to him. However, after all, we decided to hang the painting in a prominent place so that he will be smiling down on the families for the rest of our history. The bigger, even more important surprise came from the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education. A representative of the Minister awarded Father Halligan a condecoracion and a medal for having created a unique educational model which prepares young people and adults not only in technical skills but also in moral values, thus enabling them to break the cycle of poverty that enslaves them. The Ministry acknowledged the Center's educational system and recommended it to future generations of Ecuadorians. Although we would have liked for them to give us a grant in funds, we have no plan to pawn the award.



*EDUCATION DIRECTOR, TEODORO
BARROS, PINS A MEDAL ON PADRE*

Tax deductible donations can be sent to:

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Visit us on the Web @
<http://www.workingboyscenter.org>

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