

# Christmas is in our hearts!

Oh boy! Can you see Christmas in the eyes and smile of Maria! As adults we feel the warmth of Christmas in our hearts as we reflect upon the nativity narrative or see young kids' eyes sparkle on Christmas morning. Christmas began in the heart of God. It is complete only when it reaches the heart of man. Our hearts would be especially grateful if you'd send a Christmas-sized gift our way this year! Mail it to our return address or hop online to donate at:



[www.workingboyscenter.org/make-a-donation](http://www.workingboyscenter.org/make-a-donation). ¡Muchas gracias!

## Where did Christmas go?



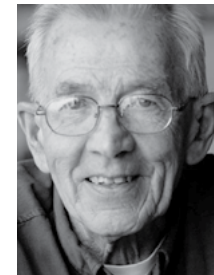
Daniela doesn't deserve the ton of sympathy she's looking for. It's a party. She only wanted a party her size, not God's size. But this Christmas event is frighteningly satisfying. It's unexpected. It's continuously new and mysterious. It reveals love that conquers on contact. There's no end to it. A lot of babies get scared and want to stay afraid and away and scream, "Not true!" "Not true!"

Daniela will get over it, just like the rest of us. A contemplation of what's lighting up the world from the darkness of one silent night is all she needs.

# THE SHOESHINE SPECIAL

NEWS FROM THE WORKING BOYS' CENTER • QUITO, ECUADOR • CHRISTMAS 2013

## Padre's Message



DEAR FOLKS,

Merry Christmas!

We have to marvel at, as well as be grateful for, all the ways you make possible for us to enjoy Christmas. The centerfold includes mention of some of all those ways. They have become family traditions we can share with you. But they are also expressions of the ongoing presence of Jesus's love that you make present in the daily lives of our families from one Christmas day to the next.

Nowadays it's professionally fashionable to publish impact studies humbly bragging about accomplishments or whatever might be needed to turn some crank handle. We did one of those about eight years back which made us look like

Utopia did happen in Quito with the Working Boys' Center's operations.

But facts, figures and evaluations fade away to nothing in the context of the mystery of God inspiring your powerful generosity and our loving gratitude. Even in the depths of that mystery, we very clearly see ourselves getting the best of the deal because no other happiness beats the happiness of gratitude. In that, we win; and you'll never catch up with us. But when the trophies and medals are being given out, God will probably find some kind of a decoration for you.

God loves you.

John J. Halligan, S.J.

## Sweet Little Jesus



The picture proves it. It's only in the nursery or kindergarten that one gets the full experience of celebrating with the baby Jesus. That's where they have enough innocence not to make it into an anniversary or a remembrance. With the small people, it's a happening with emphasis

on physical and emotional exhaustion. The rough trip to the stable where there's a crib for the baby, the singing and dancing for all the guests, the pile of gifts to be shared, food for all the hungry, the new colors of everything under that bright starlight, the angels flying the word around - all of it is happiness and not too much to enjoy. But there has to be some take-a-break time. Mary has to sit down, ponder it all and get her solid grip on what it all really means, because she's going to have to give out all the favors until the end of time.

Jesus is already catching her eye with encouragement. He's tipping her off that all this new restless agitation will be part of the happening. If everybody is going to be loosened up enough to love and to accept being loved, everything's going to have to keep changing and not stay the same.

# Let Children Proclaim in Every Land, “Hosanna to our King!”

Here at the Working Boys’ Center – A Family of Families in Quito, Susi Yepez and her very small staff of one plus her very big group of generous friends are constantly energizing the development of our apostolate. Of course, doing all the things that achieve funding is a big part of their efforts. But a big addition to their accomplishments has been the continued achievement of solid friendships throughout the local society. That local support has always been a big factor in our survival. Susi’s group has as many work sessions as necessary to get and wrap the hundreds of special gifts for the small kids. Each year all the new friends are invited to come and join in our Christmas celebrations.



*Susi and friends stop their labor to smile for the photo.*



*“Joy to the World” our adults sing out.*



*Christina de Berg gets Joe’s take on Baby Jesus’ gift to him.*



*A bundle with something for everyone in the family.*

Those celebrations are not just one big blast on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. The kids’ choir starts practicing in September. The adult choir starts in October.

All year long, overseas missionary groups from parishes and schools are enlisted in the sorting of donated used clothing so that each family gets a big bundle of usable items at Christmas. A great part of the clothing is new and unused, carried in by our visiting groups. So the ritual of “Christmas Bundles Day” is by no means a minor event. I don’t think God would ever put the folks to the terrible test of choosing between celebrating the baby Jesus or their Christmas clothes bundles.



*Welcome to Jesus, Light of all the World.*

Christmas, they line up at the offertory in mass and give the baby Jesus pictures of themselves pasted on their hearts. The baby Jesus expects that every year and always has a special gift for each kid after mass.

Also from the start of the school year, our yearlong USA volunteers create theater



*Everyone wants to play Rudolph in the Special Education group.*

First Communion for the second graders is always scheduled for Christmas day; and catechism for that starts with the school year.

The first graders can’t be completely left out. So, on the Saturday just before



*Our hearts belong to Jesus.*

productions, have auditions and try-outs to select the best performers and then give parts to everybody so that the actors and audiences are on and off at all the riotous performances. This year our USA volunteer and 2013 Academy Award Winner, Olivia Young, will present a smashing performance starring Red-nosed Rudolph in the lead.

The all-year-long relaxed pace of preparations gradually increases from the start to a panicked hurry near the end when, all of a sudden, it’s Christmas. All is calm. All is bright. Just another day in our lives with Jesus.