

Our Very Little Kids Have Created a Nativity Road Show

Our pre-schoolers have learned to re-enact the Christmas narrative keeping it faithful to God's intended emphasis on the specifically human aspects of the whole event of Jesus being born just like anyone of us was born. Of course the earthly details of a birth are never exactly the same; and in this case the kids can't leave Heaven completely out of it. The angel offering Mary her vocation to be God's mother is obviously visiting from Heaven. When Mary tells Joseph about her acceptance, the poor guy initially expresses his thought that she has gone nuts. So, the angel from Heaven has to appear again to calm Joseph's conscience. But most of the rest of the drama is down to earth. The kids highlight the fact that it's the poor people who are the most hassled by government decrees. They stay on their earthly target with tourist class travel on foot to Bethlehem as an experience with absolutely no fun at all. An emergency stopover



Little Cherubs without wings

for a poor family to have a baby in a barn causes poor people no annoyance but rather lots of gratitude for the warmth of the animals. The royal camel caravan shows up with praise and gifts showing that God from Heaven is still running things on earth. Even so, the holy family gets a timely warning and has to drag out and run again, this time for their lives, from a wacko in power. But, to insure a happy ending, the kids bring in a song and dance chorus line of little cherubim angels for a victory celebration dance.

We have all heard the story many times in many ways. But our kids have practiced and memorized for life the lines they shout out clearly and loudly for the all the people to listen and think, with special help from the kids, about this event that gives the only worthwhile meaning to our existence. Their entrancing performance has brought upon them a tradition of invitations to act at other Christmas-time gatherings around town.



The kings explain how they found Jesus

If You Happen to be Passing Through Rome

Pope Francis is our time's special motivator to grasp the biggest and best opportunity of our existence. He keeps reminding us that we are created in such a way as to be God's own image front and center facing all the good as well as all the sinfully turned bad realities in our lives. Francis says we should not only revel in God's merciful invitation to an eternity of eat, drink and be merry; but we should also look the Devil square in the eye and face down the human family's mishmash of each day's immediately reported evils. Francis thinks the worst of those evils is the cyclic or generation to generation dire poverty that is increasingly drowning the human family's

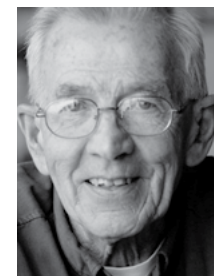
self esteem in a cross tide of hateful resentments. This fast spreading human disgrace, requires a miraculous and very courageous faith in order to act one's part openly with a confidence in victory worthy of one of God's created images. But I'm the witness that all of you benefactors do exactly that. You know that a victory over this kind of poverty will require nothing less than a variety of miracles. You trust and help WBC to give it your all here in Ecuador. You're Francis's kind of people. He's very much in with Jesus. So I ask one other favor: if you're asked, don't forget to say that I'm a good friend of yours.

THE SHOESHINE SPECIAL

NEWS FROM THE WORKING BOYS' CENTER • QUITO, ECUADOR • CHRISTMAS 2016



Padre's Message



DEAR FOLKS,
MERRY CHRISTMAS

As the years go by, we find that each Christmas is more delightful than the previous one. For all of us as kids, Christmas was a ton of affection and gifts for us. We were too small to understand or think much about Jesus. But, now, as we grow older, how much more wonderful it is to have the focus off our selves and onto Jesus! He lives in us every day as we all try to recoup for each other all the happiness that was ever meant to be for everybody and forever! It's especially at Christmas time that He helps our minds to starkly ponder that daunting challenge to identify with Him as co-redeemers of ourselves with Him. At other times of the year, He uses a gentler stride to accompany us in the process of helping to save each other. He wants us to live each day of the predestined plan that had to have a new salvation added to it. He wants us to laugh and rejoice over being turned around from being powerless traitors sliding hell bent and into being baptized co-redeemers with

Him. He wants us to know we are every bit as amazing as the Magi.

Those exceptionally clear thinking, brave and generous guys in their star powered race across the desert were expecting to welcome and bow down to a magnificent, more fearsome king ever to appear in our midst. When the star settled over where Jesus was asleep in the animals' food trough, they didn't hesitate to go in and meet the holy family and catch the mysterious power of a new family of God on earth spreading salvation to everybody heading for Heaven. That was thousands of years and millions of lives ago.

Today, there are thousands of us who are part of the Working Boys' Center branch of that same holy family as new members, staff personnel, volunteers, benefactors, visitors and friends from afar. We merrily cherish and keep spreading that same experience of the Magi.

In Christ,
John J. Halligan, S.J.
John J. Halligan, S.J.

Jesus Belongs to Each and Every Family

As friends of WBC, you have to meet "the Jesus brothers" whose Christmas statues are pictured crowded all together up close to the altar at midnight mass. They're put there by the families of Holy Trinity parish in a place called Guangopolo, forty five minutes out of Quito. Your connection to those families is through Father Halligan from WBC who has been their first and only pastor since more than fifty years ago. At midnight mass, the folks look very closely and tell the reverend pastor to do it again if his lavishly sprinkled holy water hasn't splashed on their Baby Jesus statue. It's important that each Jesus statue be validly baptized into its family on Christmas and brought back home to its place of honor. Believe it: in most homes, all the family members talk to Jesus before leaving the house every single day all year long. These folks are all either very happily approaching or already arrived at prosperity out of a dreary inherited poverty. They are very aware of having

made that journey with His help. Nothing is more important than His birthday.

Each year a crowded busload of us from WBC makes contact with "the Jesus brothers" at a Christmas Eve mass in Guangopolo. We know that dying and rising with Jesus at the consecration has the most importance at any mass. But we also want to be where folks feature the star of our whole show spending His birthday with all His brothers and sisters close to the altar where we all have it made.



Blessed be Sweet Little Jesus

Ruben Carvajal, 25 Years a Priest

More than forty years ago, I got to know twelve year old Ruben Carvajal as one of the then two hundred proud shoeshine boys in our Working Boys' Center. He was also one of the twenty or so emergency cases that lived in our Center's small dormitory. The rest of his family had had to move from Quito to another city, Ambato, because that was the only place Ruben's father could get permanent work to support the big family of twelve kids. Ruben was allowed to stay at the Center in Quito where he was working and paying his way through school. Back then, poor kids were not forced to conceal their earning money to help their families from the eyes of a thoughtlessly compassionate society. They could work and earn openly and concentrate their attention on more worthwhile issues like deciding in what part of



Ruben's Dad was always proud of his sport ability

town they could earn more and faster. I remember that one very big problem in Ruben's life was his oversized shoeshine box. It was almost big enough to put wheels on so the kid could push it. It had been constructed by Ruben's carpenter father a very loving man but no specialist in tools for the shoeshine business. Nevertheless Ruben was able to make enough money with it. People laughed at the size of his shoebox but they also had to see that he was making do with life's circumstances as well as anybody. In fact, he won the Center's prize one year as "Working Boy Of The Year". We didn't hire a band or have a parade or anything showy like that. Our goal was simply to recognize that God gives the poorest of us the guts to attain respectable goals.



Ruben and his buddies complete the first ever "Introduction to Technical Training" course

Ruben was always a popular guy. But his decoration as working boy of the year was not a result of some kind of a popularity contest. He had earned the honor. He was out on the streets every morning early enough to both make a small bundle shining the shoes of men in suits heading to their work in offices and, also, get back to serve the morning mass in the Jesuit Church in midtown Quito. Before his family had moved to Ambato, Ruben had promised his mother he would do mass every day. He kept that promise all the years he lived in our dormitory, working and studying to finish both grammar and high school as well as earn certification as a carpenter. Then he left the Center to follow his vocation to be a priest.

In September of this year 2016, at Center Number One, we celebrated Ruben's twenty fifth



Some of the family came to the party to send Ruben off to the seminary

anniversary as a priest with a mass followed by a party in Center Number One where Ruben had grown up and where Ruben had celebrated his first mass. Ruben's ninety year old mother came. It was a mass gathering of the big Carvajal family and relatives, his old gang of former shoeshine boys, an almost as big gang of fellow priests of all ages, a couple of former WBC girls from Ruben's time who have become nuns, some guys Ruben went through high school with, including a few politicians (good ones), a lot of the present WBC membership and staff, and delegations from all the parishes around Quito where Ruben has served. We all had to be thinking the same thoughts about God's preference for us lower class folks.

At any rate, we really tried to throw the house out the window celebrating. We're old-fashioned and feel especially privileged because not every family gets a priest vocation. I offered to give the sermon on the wisdom of Ruben's continued perseverance as our WBC priest because his certification in carpentry didn't include all the modern computerized gimmicks. He thanked me but preached his own sermon about our universal share in Christ's priesthood through baptism and his own priesthood resulting from lifetime contact with a lot of those present.



The WBC has most of the vocations covered - priest, single life, religious



Thanks be to God sings the choir at the anniversary Mass



Ruben's 90 year old mother shares his joy



A collection of priestly "friends in the Lord"