

Former Shoeshine Boy is now Our Professor Jose Chiluisa

We still have contact with a group of former shoeshine boys who fifty years ago were the founders of Working Boys' Center. They still work, most of them, at the trades learned so long ago in the Center to support their families. They want very much to show their gratitude to WBC; and new events are giving them that big chance to help. Government officials investigating the situation of kids who work in the streets discovered that WBC during the past fifty years has been operating all the programs needed not only by the kids but also by their families. So now we're all working together. The government is helping to finance work programs off the streets for the kids; WBC provides the way the kids can earn the money they and their families desperately need; Sister Cindy Sullivan, BVM has already equipped and stocked materials for six training and production workshops; the above mentioned founding members have committed to promote sales of the production; and we have six instructors ready to go. It's a sure thing we'll be reporting on the fabulous success of all that. But here in this issue we want to feature the one and only Jose Chiluisa, a founding member, a conqueror of all the evils of poverty and our new instructor in carpentry for the working kids.



Young Jose Chiluisa in the hospital with his buddy Manuel Mera

He was nine years old when we met. He shined the shoes of some of us on the central plaza in Quito. We talked about WBC. He was very definitely interested. He enrolled as a member in WBC along with his brothers Juan, Rafael and Angel and without his father and mother who had become alcoholics. We don't write off the lack of loyalty of the parents as simply unfortunate incidents in the life of the Chiluisa family. A while later Rafael and Angel would follow their parents' example into early deaths in the whirl of misery and rum-running for the folks in Quito's red light district. They were helpless victims not defiant self destroyers; and it's our fault that we couldn't get them to grab onto the WBC life buoy. That still happens among the poor.

For a few months Jose was into all the action in our attic "CENTER" as one more working kid until one day our doctor, while giving Jose his turn at a physical exam, was so shocked she literally ran to the office on a red alert. Jose was sure to lose at least his foot if not more. The quick background on that is that one year before, a big banana truck backing up in the late night darkness had knocked him

down and run over only his left heel. The driver was a nice guy who took him to a hospital where the treatment included putting on a cast. Within a couple of days his father sobered up enough to break the cast off so Jose wouldn't attract undue concern of potential clients paying for a shoeshine. During the red alert in the office, a co-worker Susi Yepez contacted her father who was a distinguished doctor and that got things moving in Jose's favor. Jose spent the next three years on and off mostly in hospital confinement and in care of some of the best doctors in the world recovering from a lot of donated surgeries. His courage and good nature captured the hearts of doctors, nurses, attendants and anybody who came to know him. We visited him a lot and bought him a guitar with an instruction booklet. God helped the doctors save both his leg and his completely cured foot enabling him to graduate from WBC in the specialty of carpentry.



Jose Chiluisa, the teacher, is presented to his students

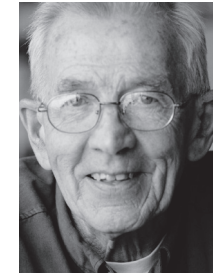
He's been supporting his family as a successful carpenter all his adult life. His kids are all grown up and now we can accept his offer to be one of our professors in our new training and production program for working kids. Sharing his expertise in carpentry will be a great gift to our working kids. But his greater gift to them will be his example as a cheerful, calm and cool survivor of the devastation that extreme misery facilitated for the family he grew up in. He'll surely be alert to recognize and deal with any of that stuff going on in the lives of his students.

Jose has been through the process in which we learn that God's in total control and that "there, but for the grace of God, go I." Weakness and apparent failure are original sin's middle names. Jose was telling me he loves his mother and father and all his brothers and hopes to join them in Heaven. But what he most wanted to tell me was that after he got out of the hospital forty years ago, he did let me bully him out of becoming a career guitar player and into a career as a carpenter; but it gives him great consolation to clarify face to face that all his kids are excellent guitar players.

THE SHOESHINE SPECIAL

NEWS FROM THE WORKING BOYS' CENTER • QUITO, ECUADOR • FALL 2015

Padre's Message



DEAR FOLKS,

Pax Christi.

I wish you could witness and enjoy the special commotion taking place all during September in the Working Boys' Center - A Family Of families. A new school year is beginning for our mothers, fathers and children. The process is always noisy and slow like an ancient jalopy that makes a big fuss about starting up but once it gets going, chugs confidently along to a happy end of this next trip.

The new families signing up for membership help create the season's friendly hubbub. They mix in with the already registered families from previous years who have invited them to come and see and join up not only for school but for the whole WBC program. The mix makes it possible for our experienced folks to encourage and calm the new parents who are terrified by the Center's obligation to get into basic education and preparation for good jobs. The kids in the new families are okay with the novelty of going to

school. But their parents have lived with the conviction that their poverty disqualifies them from education and any other good things in life. So the solidarity created by our long term members empowers the new parents to conquer their fears.

I was strolling or gliding in a cloud with these thoughts on my way to the office when one of the new little girls, about seven years old, blocked my way asking, "How old are you?" I said, "Eighty five." She said, "How come you didn't die?" I said, "I'll beat you in a race across this playground." She gracefully drifted away satisfied with her new knowledge that some people don't die they just get a little crazy. I kept strolling and thinking about how you benefactors enable us to keep challenging God's seven to seventy year olds to prosper and glorify our maker with their new self confidence. And don't worry; I'll find out that kid's name and weaknesses and even up the score.

We're all winning!

John J. Halligan, S.J.

John J. Halligan, S.J.

Back to School Help From The Withers'



The Withers' stand behind their generous donation.

Mr. and Mrs. Dan and Mary Withers came on a visit from Florida with suitcases full of school and art supplies. All that stuff will be the treasure buried in our classrooms for the poor people who don't have money to buy it, no matter how much it's needed for that most important hands-on part of learning. Thanks to Mary and Dan, we'll be starting this school year well equipped with everything we need.

In the pile we noticed a six pack of large bottles of sun block concentrate for making a lot more of it. We won't use it for sun protection for most of our students who'll be indoors creating art works at their desks. Nor will we use it for any who show signs of that mysterious potential for producing masterpieces and want to hit the streets and marketplaces for scenes to paint. We'll train them to wear more becoming outlandish head pieces that block the whole sidewalk like real professional artists. We'll save the sunblock as a valuable and handy item for when we get lucky again and the kids get an opportunity to bus or fly down to the coast to play in the sand and swim in the ocean. Vice-president of Ecuador, Jorge Glas, did that for our kids last year. So, anything is possible.

What most delighted us with Mary and Dan's visit was meeting two new friends who very simply do what comes naturally to God the father's children: identify with some of the Father's other children in need of friends who can help. As I understand Pope Francis's message to the whole world, that kind of identifying is the main play in the game of life that God gives us.

Belonging and Trusting are What Make Us a Family

A family of families like the Center is no more precious in our sight and God's than an individual family of parents with children making their way happily through the experiences God wants as everybody's preparation for Heaven. But the Working Boys' Center - A Family Of Families becomes a special miracle of God's providence for our families of working children when evil circumstances wipe out their normally expected opportunities for a fair chance at winning salvation with dignity. Last December we gave ourselves a gold star in deportment as God's instrument of salvation for thousands of families of working kids. This centerfold of Shoeshine Special features a couple of more of those many WBC miracles in the making.



These instruments are MINE says Sarah

A new member on site this school year is her grace Tatiana Rodriguez. She's a vibrant presence like a storm cloud to wary eyes. Her first rumble started at a noonday mass. The kids' choir was in place with the instruments they love to use. Suddenly this new girl in the choir, Tatiana, had everybody's attention acting like a furious, self appointed choirmaster redistributing all the instruments among the kids. Frozen with wonder, the choir let her do it. But one boy wouldn't release control of the drum. Rather than focus on that fight, we started mass. Sister Cindy with the guitar managed to keep the crowd singing normally. But Tatiana had the tambourine and a determination to make its sound reign with hard, lightening-fast, over the shoulder swings thudding into her left hand. She was expressing her fury at drummer boy. I preached about God's wanting us all to get to know and, nevertheless, love each other. After mass Tatiana was more than willing to forget the fury and to talk. She rambled that she belongs to one of the new families in the Center; she is a christian, not a catholic; she has played and sung in a vast number of church choirs both in Colombia and more recently in Ecuador; she has two sisters and a brother; she knows all about music; she doesn't want to be a musician; her sister wants to be a musician; she wants to be a doctor who takes care of mothers and babies; her family isn't settled anyplace; and, just for good measure, she thinks the kid with the drum at mass has no idea what he's doing and should be replaced. She said all that in a too confident non stop monologue like the rough and tough reformer of the world that she is not. So I couldn't miss the main message: "We are desperate and you have to help us!"

As we chatted, Tatiana showed more than a usual gratitude for the interest shown in what she had on her mind. She talked about being scared of violence all her life, not from her loving family but from people wherever she has lived. She also talked about how things should be and shouldn't be. For example how musical instruments are for older kids who can be careful with them and how people who carry guns shouldn't because guns are for killing. She also mentioned her sadness that so many people she knows don't have food to eat, and can't afford any education with pencils and paper and books. She knocked me clear off my pedestal of a nice man talking to a confused little kid. It became clear as daylight that if I had been part of her life these past ten years I would probably be a budding dictator-reformer putting order into this messy world just like Tatiana is. I asked her if she thinks God will fix some of the things that are wrong. She isn't sure. We were getting deeper into sharing and her sister, Melisa was standing over there waiting forever to go to lunch. So Tatiana introduced me and we kept talking.



Padre gets the scoop from Tatiana

In the picture Melisa is the other beauty queen proud of her pigtail and standing to Tatiana's left and behind their younger sister Sarah and brother Daniel. Tatiana and Melisa, both together and with each other's support, are more relaxed sharing their experiences which have to be shared. The Rodriguez family is from Colombia and, because of all the guerrilla activity, they are not just from one town but, from all the various places they have run from all their lives. I sat up straighter hearing how the armed men and women take over different neighborhoods and shoot to kill each other while the innocent folks trying to live in their own neighborhoods hide indoors. Just as crazy as that. Tatiana, Melissa and their whole family have seen little kids who didn't or couldn't get indoors get killed. We chatted a good while. I can report that the Rodriguez family is too familiar with the mayhem the Devil loves. I won't detail it. I only want to brag about the Center for two things in their lives. One is that they planned to be only temporarily in Quito when they travelled up from the coast to the immigration office. They were trying to become legal residents there when they met a member of our Center who peddles candy on the sidewalk outside. She brought

them here to the Center. We are successful missionaries! The other brag is that the Rodriguez family is just one of more than sixty new families getting to know what solidarity is in a family of more than three hundred families achieving the prosperity our benefactors want them to have. We got Heaven made in the shade we spread over each other caught in this heat.



Tatiana, Melisa, Daniel and Sarah

Justice demands some space here for the kid with the drum, Kevin Chicaiza, who doesn't take kindly to being pushed around by some do-gooder defending musical instruments from everybody else when she plays a tambourine like she's throwing rocks at the congregation. Kevin has all the confidence of a long time member. He and his mother, two sisters and three brothers have been enrolled in the Center about three years and they like everybody in it and everything about it. They aren't poor immigrants but they are an especially poor family on its way to prosperity through the Center's programs. They value and use all the opportunities to help and be helped. As a matter of fact Kevin worked from the age of eight to eleven for handouts as a singer on the Quito busses until the government sent the cops to prevent kids from working. He never had or used his own instruments. But he knows enough how to take care of the Center's mass instruments. He probably treats them better than than Miss Rockthrower. And so on. But it wouldn't be a great surprise if this battle over the drum is the beginning of a lifetime friendship. Here's why.

The last thing Kevin wants to appear to be is a bossman tough guy. That's why he had been cooperating lately with this new girl Tatiana guarding the instruments all these past three weeks until she showed up to distribute them She's a bigger girl and he liked the idea that she was protecting the Center's instruments by giving them to the kids big enough to use them for the choir. One day Tatiana was late getting to mass. That was the day she appeared to be in a fit grabbing instruments from some kids and giving them to others. She even tried to get the drum from Kevin. But he calmly held tight and she had to simply take her defeated

place in the choir. That explains the day's tambourine playing style. Both kids are still in the choir and they wouldn't be if they didn't like each other and want to find out more about each other. The give and take in the Center will make that activity into an open friendship.

I happen to know that Kevin also has other important thoughts on his mind. He lives with the terrible knowledge that his own father left home as a dejected loser because he couldn't make a decent living for the family. That may seem cowardly to us; but we're not qualified to judge others. Kevin and I talked about fortitude, a big word and a big part of becoming able to look out for the good of people we love. Kevin knows better than most that a guy needs to use courage to make and keep decisions early in life. He knows it's okay for him occasionally to tour around in dreamland and gaze at imagined pinnacles of some kinds of success as long as his tour in this real world as a Center member includes a real preparation for the good job he wants as an automechanic to pay his way in real life.

Unlike Joel Manobanda, Armando Rodriguez is another powerful force among us not lighting up the path for others to follow but providing the need where the other kids shine their light. He is mentally challenged and a bit physically disabled. But this doesn't mean Armando is all take and no give. Rather he is a constant influence as well as model for the teachers and directors to use in showing the other kids how to escape from world population of "just me" to the big world God made and the Devil gets us to mock. At first Armando made it clear that he had no intention of learning to talk, play, be sociable or useful to anyone in any way. His plan with the Devil's help was to get mean even with the lifestyle he didn't ask for but got. Our psychologist, Dr. Elizabeth, and her crew of special educators performed the various miracles that have him jabbering to everybody about everything. Rosa Maldonado in the laundry room offered him a job folding towels for fifty cents a day. She also put the bug in his ear that it was gross underpayment and he should force Madre Miguel to the negotiating table. He got a dollar a day out of her by agreeing to maintain a savings account. His parents have more fun and the other kids, enlisted in a Center-wide effort to help members like Armando, have learned all about God's gift to us of people so special precisely because they need so much from us.