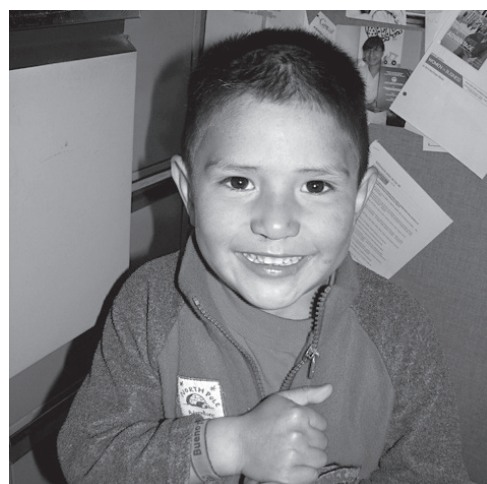


Diego Fiallos: Con Artist Par Excellence

The young gentleman posing as a saint in this picture hasn't won his halo yet. But, someday, maybe. He's certainly a groundbreaker in the realistic pursuit of any happiness God's world offers. He doesn't just wait for good opportunities. He grabs them. Diego Fiallos is his name. He is four going on five. He hails from Pisuli, a rough and tumble neighborhood famous for its survival training even for pre-schoolers. So he's very good at convincing the other boys and girls in day care that he deserves and expects the best. He could be the Working Boys' Center poster boy because on weekends we have no day care and he accompanies his mother with her cart selling ice cream on the streets. He stars in this article on famous personalities not only because he is a consummate charmer but also because he's a motivator for keeping the Working Boys' Center going with your help.



Caption



Caption

Almost every evening, after day care closes, he escapes from whomever is minding him to visit Madre Miguel in the main office for a chat about the day's news. He's big enough to turn the doorknob and crash over to her desk where he can be at peace once he sees her box of lollipops is full. Along with Madre, the rest of us get to hear his loud voice telling all the bigger than life details of what's going on in day care. Secure in his belief that none of what he's saying will be checked out, he tells of academy award winning performances the boys and girls put on. He himself was one of the only ones who wasn't afraid to approach and give the

Easter Bunny a carrot when Bunny visited. He's also the best singer of the songs they're all learning and, by the way, his kid sister Diane also in day care, can't sing at all. It goes on like this, his daily big burst of self esteem and confidence that he's making it no matter what the others do or don't.

Last evening he showed a spark of that self-delusion in our human condition that makes us forget to think of and live for the folks around us. When he finished the news report and put his hand out for a lollipop, Madre said he wasn't getting one because of the way he had misbehaved and disturbed everybody at our noonday mass. He said, "You're a liar!" When she asked if she should wash his mouth with soap, he quick on the draw said, "I already had my bath." As a matter of fact, Diego, as precocious as he is, is still rather young to be expected to be thinking of the common good of folks around him. But if the WBC can survive and support his and the other kids' formation as Christians, he'll be one of our champions. We remember one day he didn't show for mass and when asked why he said, "I had to help my mother sell ice cream." I told him mass is more important than selling ice cream and he defiantly retorted that they need to make money because they can't do anything at all without money. He's got that right. And, like I imply, the Center needs time and money to fill in around the edges of Diego's priorities.



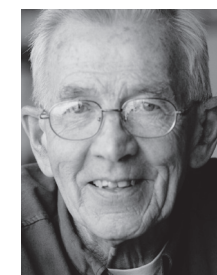
Caption

THE SHOESHINE SPECIAL

NEWS FROM THE WORKING BOYS' CENTER • QUITO, ECUADOR • SUMMER 2014



Padre's Message



DEAR FOLKS,

The Lord's peace be with you.

The Working Boys' Center is far into its 50th year and each new day is an added happiness knowing God is inspiring all of you to keep us going. We must all be doing something God wants done. Our folks in the Center are not at all completely caught up in bravely struggling out of their own poverty and being humbly grateful for any help they get. They're more into being the real presence of Christ to each other and living that glorious truth of who we are and whom we're dealing with. Also, this whole Family of Families is talking itself up louder all around town. Pope Francis has us all thinking twice about any kind of too quiet Christianity. He says that the communication that includes caring about each other brings God into our activities. That's practically a papal mandate that you have to read this issue of the Shoeshine Special all the way to the end.

Thanks to Francis, we're renewing our confidence in using our special talents for inviting ourselves into lives we know would stay dreary unless we forcefully express our welcome to them into the Center. We've stopped contemplating our past progress in the WBC like it's a fortune that belongs in our safe. Rather we take it out with us on our visits all around Quito to the dwellings of poor folks with working kids who don't know us yet. We're drawing them into our Family of Families with information about the Center and especially about our system of promoting the practice of the values that causes prosperity. We're not going to coast smoothly and quietly into our August 8th, 9th, 10th anniversary blast. We plan to careen in with lots of new families aboard, loud and raucous like the joy of the Gospel.

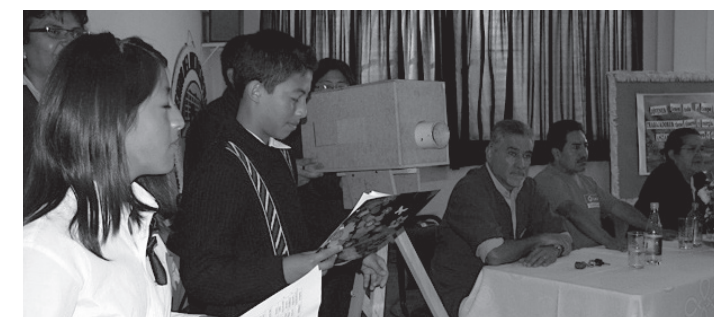
Your most grateful human development representative,

John J. Halligan, S.J.

John J. Halligan, S.J.

Our Great Exposé

We decided to break silence about the plans for our next fifty years of Working Boys' Center's operations. The grammar school kids staged the press conference at which WBC staff persons answered some very probing questions. Should poor little children learn to work, earn money, have personal savings accounts, contribute to their families, decide what profession they'll study and think they are hot stuff? Should their sisters have the same outlandish rights? If the staff approves of all that, then what will the staff work at when there are no more poor people? The tension was never low but it blew a whistle at the question: whom should kids obey: their parents or the cops or nobody?



Caption

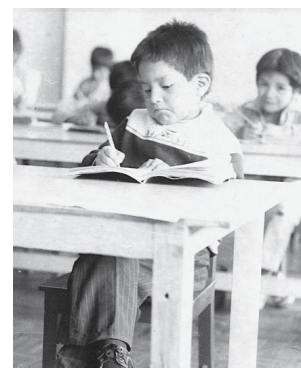
It's probably a good thing that all the microphones, recorders, cameras and wires were made of cardboard and string. There's no evidence to destroy and, anyway, we couldn't withstand a hot air raid. The mainstream TV, radio and press corps sneaked off quietly not wanting to report or even say what they had heard.

It Takes Heroism to Accept Our Invitation

On any visit to a new family, we're a little bit nervous because we're barging into their lives with the message about their own eternal worth lying under a pile of their own bad habits. They already have much clearer perceptions of their own circumstances than we will ever have. So they're a little bit nervous too that maybe we expect them to hang their sinful heads before us saints visiting them in the midst of all the misery and filth that's all theirs and not ours; like maybe we think that along with no money they have no brains either. But we speed past all the nervousness into our announcement of the good news that Jesus is back, out of the tomb, alive in all of us and empowering us to give and take the help needed as our best shot at the glory to come. We want them to sacrifice some of their privacy and let us deliver your help to them. We're the visitors with this message and it's our job to charm them into letting us have a space in their lives.



Visiting a prospective family



Education - one of our core values

In the back of our minds, as we make friends and invite them to visit us in the WBC, is always the line up of the ten values we want to consciously practice with them: loyalty, personal formation, family, religion, education, economy, work, recreation, health and housing. Our approach is slow, careful and never innocent but always sharing the guilt. In this world of plentiful riches that God gives to us all, neighborhoods full of people living in misery generation after generation are sinful evidence of irresponsibility. But whose irresponsibility? Theirs? God's? Yours? Mine? Nobody's? I'm guessing we don't have to identify whose responsibility it is as long as we concern ourselves seriously to stop the damage it does.

Some experiences suggest that it's pointless to try to establish responsibility for the kind of poverty the Center deals with. The other day, in a very poor section where the people don't yet have any members in the WBC, I celebrated the burial mass of resurrection for an old guy and enjoyed a special consolation of having anointed him a couple of days previously. Afterwards we got talking about his life and I found out that during these past ten years he had been bouncing from one daughter's shack to the other daughter's shack. Neither daughter had really wanted him. As they explained, they could barely feed their kids and couldn't have the old man taking the kids' food. A look inside one of those hundreds of shacks is more than enough evidence of a corresponding clutter of ignorance of any value, other than survival, in the minds of the inhabitants. So, even though we don't have clarity about who's responsible for the effects of poverty, we can explode that awful evil into a glorious opportunity of repeating Jesus' miracles of helping folks to love each other both here and forever in Heaven. The Center is a constant scene of such explosions.



Is this Home Sweet Home and Welcome to All?



Family fun and camaraderie

start practicing the values. They can start budgeting all the family cash income for calm, cool, conscious control of all family expenses and for savings in a bank to finance decisions like creating separate sleeping places in the hovel which will soon enough become the family mansion. While the mansion's taking shape, they'll have thought about buying furniture for the new separate areas, including one for just sharing each other's comfortable company. Their monthly turns on the Sunday work gangs building each others' houses turn into shared rights to be helped in any emergency. They'll probably never turn away a loved one. As time goes on, they might use some ideas from the Center about healthy home recreation. There are a million other details that convince a new family to stay on as members.

Back to our visits to potential new families in our efforts to invite them. Families do accept the invitation and come to the WBC where we can show off all we have to share with them. They become very attracted and the very first value we talk about with them is the loyalty that impels us all to live Christ drawing other families with working kids together into the camaraderie we have in the Center to help start and continue practicing all the other values which are other miracles of grace. We ask God to stay alive in us while we tell them about our programs which have helped more than six thousand families leave poverty behind forever both for themselves and for their descendants. We point out that with the meals, health care and education all taken care of by the WBC, it's easy to



The family mansion really accomplished



Solidarity's deepest roots in Christ

Our manual of values says that Jesus taught us all a religion about how to live with and for each other, not a religion of "better than thou." This translates into our way of living the ten values, not as rules and regulations, but as our way of inspiring each other with our efforts to imitate Christ, putting out for each other. This is how we became a big "Family of Families."