

Shoeshine Special

News from the
Working Boys' Center
Quito, Ecuador

Winter 2008

Dear Folks,

The Lord's peace be yours.

We knew just what to get Jesus for Christmas to show our happiness that He came for thirty years to teach us His new life style and share His power to live it. We knew what He mostly wants is that everybody He loves around the world become able to love like He loves. The stores do not sell anything that helps us achieve that love. But what we could do was let God the Father know we want it enough to accept the change of whatever is preventing that love Jesus wants in all of us. The Father has been getting the Holy Spirit to take care of it, as always, and that mystery of Divine love in us is having its Christmas season in 2008. Gradually we are becoming able to recognize and throw away the stuff that is keeping us from doing the best for each other, which is the same as doing the best for ourselves. As you will see, we are getting lots of powerful inspirations from each other in the center fold.

All year long, and especially during Advent, our volunteers have been adding their powerful momentum to our 400 families' effort to stay with Christ's generosity. We will show you a picture of what the devil is up against in that fearsome gang.

We will also show you a kid no more superhuman than you or I actually sharing his popsicle. Christmas Season 2008 has brought upon us all a brand new challenge to match everybody else's love.

Merry Christmas!

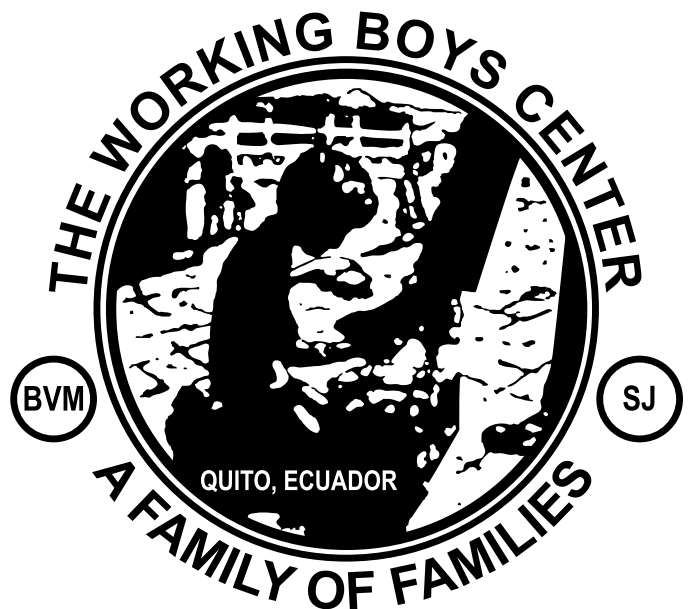
John J. Halligan, S.J.

THEY GIVE A YEAR OR TWO OF THEIR LIVES



Volunteers (front: l - r) Bridget Curley, Maggie Felker, Miho Koike, Katherine Smith, Paeter Wait (with Jessica Cochol just behind her), Anna Snow, Laura Bradley and Audrey Raemisch; (behind) Tomo Tamara, Mike Byrd, Saul Gaona, Andrew Pelikan (with Billy Schirmer behind him), Colin McGinn, Diego Villalobos (with Brandon John behind him), Marian Alonso, Mike Annunziata

In addition to those pictured, this is a view of God's power in a group of friends who are giving a year of their lives to help others conquer misery. Each one of them made a leap into the uncertainties of giving a year of their lives as missionaries. They landed where the poor are, caught in the collision of forces of overwhelming misery and the urgent need to create prosperity and happiness. They are finding it a glorious struggle to make the changes in themselves that help the folks in their great struggle to catch on to Christ's style



GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS SON



We call it the "Gringa Minga". Benefactors give time and money to help families build decent houses.

the message across. God had to come himself, as a baby, smiling forever at the folks enjoying all of the precious gifts in existence as God gives them. Then we would all get the pitch to smile and laugh and be generous with everybody.

The surrounding pictures and captions are evidence that the plan with the baby Jesus is working out well in the Working Boys' Center. There is a lot of year-long mystery surrounding our Christmas joy that we can not show in pictures. It is present in the visitors who come, in the gifts we are given and in the fun our people have making all the changes they need. Our visitors have

all heard about the poverty of the families in the Working Boys' Center; and they come to be a part of our lives and to help out. There are a lot of other friends who do not come physically, but make their presence strong with donations to keep the Center going day after day;

supporting good programs that cost money,. At Christmastime and all year long, there is no atmosphere of dependence on handouts going on. Thousands of visitors and generations of volunteers can attest that the families of the working kids rise to this ongoing challenge of presence and generosity with all the dignity of Jesus Himself. For them, Christmas is simply a very special season of laughter and joy in each year's process of changing misery into prosperity.

Saint Ignatius gets us to the heart of the Christmas message. In the Spiritual Exercises, he suggests we imagine the Father, Son and Holy Spirit before Christmas planning our salvation from all the sadness. They did not need any spy reports in order to know clearly that a lot of us needed help out of our crowded rut of taking care of "me first" and back onto the highway into the great "beyond ourselves" where the vast majority are suffering so much more than we are. They also knew that sending one more straight-talking prophet would not get



Pilar Herrera and other local artists designed, painted and installed a beautiful mural as their gift to the families of Center #1 in La Marin.



Benefactors' generosity makes possible the annual giving of Christmas bundles to each family.

Anyone who does not know the Working Boys' Center would have to wonder what fun there could be in reforming a whole life style that did not include studying, bathing regularly and making and keeping a budget with the objective of using the savings to build a "house" which is not a "room". These are all obligations that would seem to oppress them into self pity. But all the evident rooting for each other that drives the Center onward is the new game of life as God intended it to be, and as Jesus finds us at Christmas.



The "Volunteerism" program is the families' way of giving to each other.



Even the teenagers learn to give back by helping the grade schoolers with their homework.



CHRISTMAS IN QUITO FROM MAGGIE

Christmas in the Centro is most definitely NOT just a one-day affair. My last year's December at WBC was a month replete with anticipation, celebration, appreciation and joy. The tone was set in my adult classes, when I decided to share and study the beautiful Advent reading from Isaiah 35, "Let the wilderness and the dry lands exult, let the wasteland rejoice and bloom..."

All of my students savored the passage as fully as I did, and were thrilled with the posters they created of the verses, adding their own artwork, to decorate the walls of their own homes.

On December 17th, the nightly novenas began. Each night children cuddled next to us as we sang Ecuadorian carols and listened to reflections, then shared hot cocoa or animal crackers. On the last day of classes my husband Mike and I distributed small identical wrapped gifts to each of our nine first grade English students. Each gift contained a 36 cent pack of colored pencils and one yellow balloon. I will always remember how each girl carefully set herself to re-wrapping her gift, to experience the joy of unwrapping it at least one more time.

The next days followed quickly one upon another. The first graders giving their (home made) hearts to Jesus, the families receiving bundles of clothing and toys on the 22nd; the midnight Mass at Padre Juan's parish in Guangopolo on the 24th; and finally, the most important event of all: the second graders at each Center

receiving their First Communion on Christmas Day. Of course, long phone calls home to family in the U.S. were tucked in among all these festivities, but Christmastime is one time at the Center when we did not doubt that, in addition to our U.S. family, we have become part of this Family of Families here at the Center.



Tax deductible donations can be sent to:

Family Unity International, Inc.

Mrs. Patricia Parks, President

12750 Stephen Place

Elm Grove, WI 53122

Visit us on the Web @

<http://www.workingboyscenter.org>

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