



**Girls
and
Boys
Town®**

FAMILY SPOTLIGHT

THOUGHTS FROM GIRLS AND BOYS TOWN

The Original Father Flanagan's Boys' Home

Battle Holiday Doldrums With Fun

Father Val J. Peter, JCD, STD

(NAPSA)—Here in the famous Village of Boys Town that Father Flanagan founded we take our Christmas preparations seriously, almost as seriously as Eisenhower preparing for the invasion of Europe.

In some ways, we use the holiday season to prepare for battle—a battle to bring FUN to children embattled by abuse, abandonment and neglect.



Val J. Peter

Our little Village is home to more than 550 boys and girls from all over America. Many of them have never celebrated a REAL Christmas. Many of our boys and girls have no home other than Girls and Boys Town, either in this village or one of our sites across the country.

Sure, there is a place out there where a mother or father is, but many times it also includes drugs, alcohol, neglect and mental illness. That is why we try so hard to make Christmastime fun, and that is why so many of our girls and boys stay “home” for the holidays.

These children actually get two Christmases. The first is in their family homes before the Christmas break. They all celebrate the holiday in a special way only families can.

Then, those that don't have a safe place to spend the holidays, or they don't want to leave, get to celebrate all over again.

On Christmas Eve, we have a gigantic celebration for the boys. An evening turkey dinner as nice as you can make it with turkey, dressing, sweet potatoes, cranberries, tasty salads, pumpkin pie and loving and caring people surrounding them.

Then, we sing Christmas carols with great resound...Our favorite is: “The Little Drummer Boy.” Our boys identify with that

little child ...“And I played for him pa rum pum pum pum, on my drum.” “Away in a Manger” is another favorite, especially the third verse —“Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care and take them to heaven, to live with Thee there.”

On Christmas Day, it's the girls' turn. All the girls gather at our conference center, gazing out the frost-tinged windows that overlook our snow-framed lake and all the Canada geese.

We gather around the fireplace in a huge circle and talk about how each one of these girls will someday be a mom. We discuss the important role a mother has at Christmas. We teach our girls how to be leaders. They will be the ones who ensure their families celebrate the holidays in the true Christmas spirit.

Then we have an absolutely splendid dinner. We make grape-juice toasts to happy Christmases and forget about the bad Christmases of old.

Then there are the presents, there are many, but mainly things that are from the heart.

May you and your family enjoy the warmth and love our children are enjoying this Christmas. Take time to prepare for the holiday and include the simple fun things that make it special, like adding some simple warmth and love in your lives. Merry Christmas.

Girls and Boys Town, the original Father Flanagan's Boys' Home, is a leader in the direct treatment and care of abused, abandoned and neglected girls and boys. Through 19 sites across the country, the organization directly cares for more than 37,000 girls and boys annually.

Girls and Boys Town also assists 1.5 million children and parents through its National Hotline (1-800-448-3000), outreach and training programs and community partnerships.

