



## FAMILY SPOTLIGHT

THOUGHTS FROM GIRLS AND BOYS TOWN

The Original Father Flanagan's Boys' Home

### Putting the "Thanks" In Thanksgiving

*Val J. Peter, JCD, STD*

(NAPSA)—Juan Manuel entered Girls and Boys Town last summer after a life that left little to be thankful for. What seems like a miracle, however, occurred between summer and now. He is now ready to be grateful for Thanksgiving.



Val J. Peter

For Juan and his brother, Jose, life has always been a struggle, even when they were living with their parents. Their father went off to

seek work on the West Coast and never returned. Their mom got very discouraged. So they went to live with an aunt. After she died the boys were separated. Juan Manuel moved from foster home to foster home until he finally made his way to the famous village Father Flanagan built in Nebraska.

A few days ago Juan Manuel said something startling to me. He said: "For years I didn't have anything to be thankful for. Since I came to Girls and Boys Town I have lots of things to be thankful for, so I really want to put thanks back into Thanksgiving."

His statement amazed me. How did he manage to start to become thankful after all he's been through?

The answer is simple. He started to do thankful things. Way back in September Juan Manuel began by writing a thank-you letter to his reading teacher who was working so very hard with him. Her patience encouraged him to not only try harder in reading, but to help another boy with his reading homework, too.

Juan Manuel also wrote a letter of thanks to the orphanage where he had been. He thanked the Sisters who had helped him there.

Then something even more wondrous happened. He stopped feeling so very sorry for himself. He stopped using his past as an excuse. Yes, that's right. His actions helped change his feelings. He learned the basic rule that grateful actions produce grateful feelings.

Now Juan Manuel is finding simple things in life to be grateful for. Maybe the things he has done can help you find ways in your life to be grateful.

- Are you grateful for being in a safe place? Juan Manuel is. He slept well last night. He was not afraid of something bad happening.

- Are you grateful for your home? Juan Manuel is grateful for his Girls and Boys Town home. He doesn't have to sleep in a car on the street.

- Are you grateful for a good lunch? Juan Manuel is grateful for bologna sandwiches. He likes them a lot.

The rule is simple and clear: start being grateful and you will be grateful. Put thanks back into Thanksgiving by beginning to be thankful. This is one of the great secrets of life. Juan Manuel has discovered it. You can discover it, too, and help your family find it in their lives as well. May you have a happy and grateful Thanksgiving.

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. (T)