



FAMILY SPOTLIGHT

THOUGHTS FROM GIRLS AND BOYS TOWN

The Original Father Flanagan's Boys' Home

You Can Create A Lifetime Of Holiday Memories

*Father Val J. Peter, JCD, STD
Executive Director Emeritus*

(NAPSA)—When I was seven, I had a Christmas every kid should have to remember, and you can do the same for your own children with very little effort.

My mom, dad and three brothers didn't have much, but the holidays were always special. I remember hearing my mom and dad say: "Let's do a few extra holiday things with the boys."



Val J. Peter

That year we did several very memorable things. We went on a December picnic to a park because my dad loved picnics with the kids. We drove around to see Christmas lights because mom loved to do so and to have us kids with her. Dad made holiday breakfasts on December Sundays before Christmas. Mom made sugar cookies with us.

To this day, I still love picnics and holiday breakfasts, making cookies and driving around to see Christmas lights.

My point is a simple one. As children, our parents make memories for us so dear that many of us repeat them as we go through life.

Mom and dad, you get the opportunity right now, in this season, to make those kinds of memories for your children.

There are three lessons I have learned in making memories with the girls and boys here:

Whatever you do, make it fun and exciting. Here are some suggestions:

- Prepare for Christmas dinner with decorations, invitations, tablecloths, pies, dressing, and, of course, the turkey.
- Because Secret Santas are lots of fun, choose one early in Advent.
- Set one night aside for your kids to send Christmas cards.
- Reserve a day for decorating the tree.

- Make Christmas cookies for shut-ins.

- Read a Christmas story every night and watch a Christmas movie on Saturdays.

Do things the kids enjoy. Remember, your children already have a little list in their hearts of things they like to do at Christmas. If you're not sure, ask. Children are always willing to share their thoughts when asked.

Here are some of the things our kids like to do to ring home the Christmas spirit:

- We take part in the Salvation Army bell ringing.

- We serve meals at a homeless shelter.

- We sing Christmas carols at a senior center.

- Each one of us shares his or her favorite holy Christmas carol.

- Each boy and girl is asked to give something to mom and dad that doesn't cost any money.

We also have a lot of fun in the first couple of days after Christmas, shopping for bargains, relaxing and making other special memories.

To this day, I remember thinking how lucky we were to have a mom and dad like ours. The holiday season can be one of the best for you by making a lifetime of memories for your children. It is easy to do if you make Christmas in your house a season and not a day. Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

Father Steve Boes became Girls and Boys Town's fifth National Executive Director after Father Peter's retirement in July. The two will share space in future Family Spotlights. Father Flanagan's Girls and Boys Town is a leader in the treatment and care of abused, abandoned and neglected girls and boys, helping more than 43,000 children through its youth care and health care programs across the country. The Girls and Boys Town National Hotline (1-800-448-3000) also assists more than a half-million callers annually.

