

December 2024

The Best Christmas of All

"I can't keep slipping back into my old ways. I have a new wife I must care for... Will you please pray for me Papa Shane."

Juanito's story begins for us over 12 years ago. He and his sister were living with their father and stepmother. Their father worked in the capital city many hours away and only at home occasionally. While their mother worked all day, the kids were responsible to care for her smaller children. Juanito was eight and his sister was 11 years old. They hadn't been to school in years by this time. Often the stepmother would come home and see that they had not done something she wanted, so she would go into a rage and commit violent acts against Juanito and his sister. Juanito had shared with me that his stepmother would beat him with a stick on his head until he was on the ground and then grab him by his ankles and hold him over a 55 gallon barrel of water. She would then force him in head first down to his waist until he passed out. He thought he was going to die many times. Juanito also witnessed his stepmother's hateful rage against his sister. She would commit torturous acts of violence while he watched, too scared to do anything. In time, the violence became known to neighbors who contacted the authorities. Juanito and Reyna, his sister were taken from the home and ordered to Casa De Mi Padre. I vividly remember the day they came to Casa De Mi Padre. The sadness on their faces was beyond anything we had seen before.

As the kids settled into our home, it became clear Juanito was a hard-hearted little guy. Outwardly he was obedient, but inwardly he had a lot of resentment. He said for years he could not believe God even existed. I tried to show him he was worth loving and that God had seen what had been done to him and his sister. It wasn't until he turned 17 years old he finally conceded there might be a God. When he turned 18 he went on a youth mission trip and came back very happy to inform us that he had received Christ! For me it was a special time of rejoicing to hear Juan (Juanito) had finally come to know Christ.

The same time Juan was growing up, a young girl named Fermina had entered our home. She had come from a difficult family situation. Though the years Juan and Fermina developed a friendship that over many years turned into a desire to spend their lives together. So this past November we threw a big wedding for them. It was beautiful! But the story doesn't stop there. During this time a position at Casa De Mi Padre opened up to care for our girls. Cole and I talked about it and asked Juan and Fermina if they wanted the position. They prayed about it and said, "Yes." It was a perfect fit. They would need very little training because they knew exactly what we wanted because they had grown up with us. They have been serving with us for several weeks and the girls love them. It has been a beautiful thing seeing them find love and happiness after what they had been through with their families. And now, to begin their lives together ministering with us. It is a dream come true for us.

We just recently completed our yearly youth camp with our kids. We had 45 youth and 25 adults. It was fantastic! At the end of our final night Juan and Fermina knocked on my door. Juan said he needed to talk. He had something on his heart. He began to share how much he loved camp. But every year after camp he would return home and three or four days he would begin to slip into his old habits. He then said, "Papa Shane, I can't slip back into my old ways. I have responsibilities and a new wife I must care for. I have to be an example for the girls in our home. Will you please pray for me Papa Shane." After I said "Yes", I told him, "I first want to tell you something. If you want everything to change, become a man of God's Word. Fall in love with the Word of God and everything changes!" It was precious to see his desire to be the man God would have him be.

Wonderful Construction News! We have signed a new contract to install the first six courses of block for the walls of the first floor of the Common House. This is a huge praise the Lord!! Thank you everyone who gave towards this effort!

Fantastic Christmas Celebration! Thank you everyone who made our Christmas celebration for our kids so special. It was a joyous occasion to share a beautiful Christmas season and the true reason of what makes this time of the year so special!

Prayer Needed for Tomas' Medical Trip to The U.S. God has moved mountains to provide this opportunity for Tomas to receive his life changing surgery on his feet at Shriners Hospital in Greenville, South Carolina. Please pray God will prepare the doctors who will operate on Tomas. Pray for healing for Tomas and wisdom for me.

For me, seeing all that has happened in Juan and Fermina's life, serving the Lord and so happy together is the best Christmas of all. It brings to mind the words the angel said to the shepherds, "I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people." It has truly been a joyous Christmas season.

Happy New Year!
Joseph Shane Sanderson