

A Hug for José

Adam knew he had to be brave.



By Carolina Maldonado
(Based on a true story)

This story happened in Bolivia.

Ha! You don't know *anything!*" Fabricio pointed his finger at José and laughed.

Adam frowned. José had just asked the teacher a question. It wasn't nice of Fabricio to tease him for that.

"Fabricio, that's enough," the teacher said.

Adam looked over at José. He was staring down at his notebook, like he hadn't even heard Fabricio.

José was new to their school. At first, no one talked to him. Then some of the other kids started to tease him. They always called him names and laughed at him. Adam felt like he should help José, but he never knew what to say.

Besides, José looked just fine. It seemed like the teasing didn't even bother him.

Adam turned back to his book. They had a big math test soon, and he had to focus.

On the day of the test, Adam did his best, but it was hard! He was nervous about his grade. What if he had failed?

The next day, their teacher stood at the front of the room with a stack of papers.

"I have your test grades," she told them. "Many of you have room to improve, but some of you did very well."

She began to read each student's grade out loud. Most of the grades were pretty low. Adam waited anxiously for his name.

"Adam," the teacher said. "Eighty."

Adam couldn't believe it. He had passed! He smiled big.

Then the teacher read José's grade.

"One hundred," she said, loud and clear. "A perfect grade."

Fabricio stood up. "No way!" he shouted. "José cheated!"

"Yeah!" said another boy. "He doesn't know anything. He must have copied someone."

Other students joined in. José tried to tell them that he didn't cheat, but they didn't listen. The teacher tried to tell them to be quiet, but they wouldn't listen to her either.

"Cheater!" someone yelled.

"Liar!" said someone else.

Adam's heart was beating fast. He didn't know what to do. He looked over at José. He would be OK, right? José was always calm.

José stared down at his desk like he always did. Then he started to cry.

The other kids stopped shouting, and the room went silent. All Adam could hear was the sound of José crying. He knew he

couldn't just stay still this time. He had to be brave. The Holy Ghost was telling him to help José.

Adam stood up. The other kids watched him as he walked over to José. He still didn't know what to say. So he just leaned down and gave José a tight hug.

"It's OK," he whispered as he patted José on the back. "It's OK."

Soon other kids came to hug José too. Even Fabricio came over and said sorry. Before long the whole class was standing around José to say sorry and cheer him up.

"We love you, José!" someone said.

"You're the best at math!" said another.

José wiped away his tears and smiled. Adam smiled too. Being kind took courage, but it was worth it. ●

