

## This Mexican Priest Performed as a Wrestler to Pay for Orphanage

If the headline to this story sounds oddly like the plot of the movie *Nacho Libre* starring Jack Black, well, that's because they are one and the same.

Fray Tormenta was a masked wrestler that delighted crowds in Mexico's *lucho libre* circuit for years, but few would have known that underneath the mask there was a man of God—a drug addict turned priest, who wrestled purely to raise money for an orphanage.

Sergio Gutierrez Benitez was born in 1945, the second youngest of 18 children. By the tender age of 11, Benitez was addicted to drugs and proceeded down a path of crime, robbery, and odd jobs to fund his various dependencies. At age twenty, Benitez was staring down murder charges after a friend of his in a gang he was in turned up dead. Fortunately, an alibi of drunkenly passing out in a bar elsewhere helped him evade the slammer.

After that, he sought confession, for reasons only he can say, but even though he was turned away for his wickedness, he joined the seminary and became a priest.

After joining the Diocese of Texcoco, he wanted to build a shelter for the city's many homeless children and orphans, but the costs were prohibitive. An early life of gang and street fighting in which he was stabbed, beat up, and shot, left him with a high tolerance for pain, and so he pulled on a *lucho libre* mask and started wrestling for \$15 per hour under the name Fray Tormenta.

He ended up wrestling for 23 years, traveling from town-to-town elbow dropping, tombstoning, and double-legging his way to semi-stardom. Relying on his mask to hide his identity, he eventually revealed his

double-personality to officiate the wedding of a close wrestling colleague shortly before opening his orphanage, the object of his long fight.

Fray Tormenta's Puppies Children's Home has seen over 2,000 children pass through its walls. Many of whom have gone on to become doctors, civil servants, engineers, lawyers, and yes, even wrestlers. One wonders where they got the idea.