

Father Flanagan

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 4

WINTER, 2004

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Echo of his work 2

Miracles of the heart 3

Beyond Omaha—Father Flanagan's Vision

(From Father Flanagan's letter, April 4, 1946, to his nephew, Dr. William Staunton, Ballymoe, County Galway, Ireland)

(On my upcoming trip to Ireland)...I will have to spend some time in Dublin making a study of the penal institutions, particularly the juvenile type, and will want to meet Prime Minister DeValera, President Sean O'Kelly, and also the Lord Archbishop of Dublin, to discuss with each of these separately the welfare condition of youth. I also want to get in touch with the head of the social welfare department of Dublin from which, undoubtedly, all rules and regulations emanate for the whole country...

I hope in the winter of '47 to go to India to establish there a Boys Town example of a home for boys among those poor children in India. This will act as an example for probably ten or twelve other homes to be established throughout India. I intend to get in touch with Bishop Yu Pin, the Chinese Bishop who spent many days here at Boys Town with his very large retinue of people. He is most anxious to have me come to China for the same purpose. In fact, the Chinese project has been spoken for long before the Indian project.

I just had a release from Reuters Agency of several clippings where the publicity has already gone forth concerning this project in Bombay. The money will be put up by a very splendid man, an industrialist, the youngest in India, and one of the finest Catholics I have ever seen. He visited with me for five days at Boys Town during his very busy and hectic six months here...We do not know how the Chinese project will work out due to the Russian situation and the communist activities still very forceful in China. Chiang Kai Shek, who is a very dear friend of Bishop Yu Pin, is certainly for this project heart and soul...



Newly discovered color photo of Father Flanagan

Father Wegner Continues the Dream; 1948-73

(Monsignor Wegner, Father Flanagan's immediate successor, was responsible for expanding the Home Campus, introducing many program advances, achieving Father Flanagan's goal of building the Trust Fund, and establishing a major initiative in helping handicapped children, which resulted in the Boys Town National Research Hospital. Here we share excerpts from his sermon given at the Solemn High Mass of Requiem for Father Flanagan, Boys Town Dowd Memorial Chapel, May 21, 1948, 10:00 A.M.)

"...Never have I known a priest in whose character were combined so many rare gifts. He was a kind, lovable priest, forbearing almost to a fault in personal matters, but fearless and always ready in his defense of the rights of the Church. Yes, it can be truly said that he left the impress of his priestly life and character on the Archdiocese of Omaha, on this country, and on his brother-priests.

(Continued on Page Two)

FATHER FLANAGAN



Born July 13, 1886, Leabeg Farm, Co. Roscommon near Ballymoe, County Galway, Ireland.

*

Ordained, July 26, 1912, Innsbruck, Austria.

*

Founded Father Flanagan's Boys' Home, 25th & Dodge, Omaha, December 12, 1917.

*

Moved Home to German-American Home, South 13th St., Omaha, June 1, 1918.

*

Moved to Overlook Farm (present site) October 17, 1921.

*

Invested as a monsignor, November 21, 1937.

*

World premiere of movie, "Boys Town," September 7, 1938.

*

Assessed the child care system in native Ireland on visit there, June, 1946.

*

Met General MacArthur in Japan to develop care program for war orphans.

*

Sent to Europe by President Truman to aide war orphans. February 26, 1948.

*

Died May 15, 1948, Berlin, Germany

The Echo of Father Flanagan's Work Then and Now

Boys Town Times, April 11, 1939

(Most Reverent Paul Marella, titular Archbishop of Doclea and Apostolic Delegate to Japan attended the Junior-Senior Banquet at Boys Town, Spring of 1939).

Correction Halls in China would be reformed or abolished, if Bishop Paul Yu-Pin, Vicar apostolic of Nanking had his way. For a substitute, he would recommend the formation of a Chinese Boys Town, patterned along the lines of Father Flanagan's Boys' Home.

Bishop Yu-Pin, en route to San Francisco, spent several days in Omaha recently, and was the weekend guest of Father Flanagan, who twenty two years ago founded Boys Town, a haven for homeless, abandoned and neglected boys, of all colors, creeds and nationalities. The Chinese Bishop spent most of his time...with the boys, studying their method of running the "City of Little Men." At the time of the Bishop's departure he had become one of Father Flanagan's most enthusiastic boosters. "Father Flanagan is rendering a great humanitarian service to the United States," said the Chinese Bishop, who is in exile at the present time from his native land...

Upon leaving Boys Town, Bishop Yu-Pin confided he planned to seek out a Father Flanagan among the three dozen priests under his jurisdiction in China, and with the aid of the Chinese government and Chinese philanthropists, establish a Boys Town there. "The Chinese people will like Boys town, because of the 'Home Government' policy," the Bishop said...

(From the writings of Father James Brown, OSA, who worked at Boys Town under Director Father Hupp)

When Monsignor Giovanni Cheli, the Permanent Observer of the United Nations, came to offer the Mass at the transfer of the body of Father Flanagan from its temporary to its permanent tomb, Father Hupp was otherwise engaged and he asked me to meet the Monsignor at the plane and entertain him at dinner. In the course of the evening, Monsignor Cheli asked, "Why do you not start the cause of canonization for Father Flanagan?" I said, "It is a matter of miracles." He replied: "Is not the fact that the love he brought to his work has turned around the lives of 14,000 youth not a miracle enough?"

(Excerpt from article by present Executive Director, Father Val J. Peter, Alumni News, Spring 2003)

...If Father Flanagan's dream had withered and died when he suffered his fatal heart attack in Berlin, Germany, in May of 1948, think of all the thousands of kids who would not have found healing and hope. Think of all the dreams that have come true because Father Flanagan's faith, hope and love are still alive and well. Think of all the goodness that has been poured out upon countless boys and girls over countless years by countless staff...

Father Wegner's Sermon *(continued from Page One)*

...Father Flanagan was convinced that if the country and church were to be great and prosperous, a home for homeless, under-privileged, and unwanted boys had to be built and equipped. With a courage never before found in any man, with an insight that clearly perceived the future need in behalf of boys—victims too often of a cruel and cold society—and with a daring which makes possible the seemingly desperate impossibilities, his great soul gave being to Father Flanagan's Boys Home...He loved those homeless boys...He knew every one of them by name...he worked, prayed, studied, and played with them, identifying himself to the full with their lives—that was the secret of his success...Yes, he loved them to such a degree that he could truly say, with the Divine Master, that he regarded as done to himself any kindness and consideration shown to them...He was happiest in giving them a decent living, loving care and attention...These are the boys who are stricken with grief because they shall never again hear his kind words...heed his words of encouragement or look upon his kindly face...

He is going to his grave after having accomplished what would be impossible to most of us, and has left a memory of himself that will inspire all who knew him, to nobler deeds and greater sacrifices for God, Church, country, and humanity...

And so, the story of Monsignor Flanagan begins. What has been set down and said by me is only the preface. In his last will and testament—to the world, to all his boys who will grow as life flows on—he left a heritage of compassionate love, understanding, and kindness that is found but in the Sacred Heart of Jesus..."

We All Experienced His Spiritual Presence

—Stan Struble, Class of 1968

Stan Struble, Director of the Alumni, wrote this letter to teachers in the recently published teaching resource unit about Father Flanagan, "A Saint of Our Own."

I am writing to share information that is essential in understanding why the Home's alumni believe that Father Flanagan should be canonized. As a graduate and long-time employee of Boys Town, I have come to know many, many former students and employees from all generations, including those who knew Father Flanagan and those who did not. Strong tangible lines link us because of commonalities and shared experiences. The Home has weathered World Wars, depressions and recessions, changes in curriculum and staff, as well as the tumultuous transformation of America's families and cultural values. Yet Father Flanagan's spirit and work has endured, strong and undiminished, under the inspired leadership of the Home's Executive Directors.

Father Flanagan's genius and spirituality are as viable and relevant today as they were in 1917. The miracle of Boys Town is that our Founder created a place that provided exactly what children require in order to become good citizens. You see, no matter how hard the staff works, no matter how well they counsel or role model, it's still up to the individual child to make the transformation. There's no magic pill or bullet. Only the child can make the decision to heal from their abuse and neglect. No one can do the hard work for them. Herein lies the miracle and genius of Father Flanagan. All Boys Town alumni know that Father Flanagan built this place just for them. We all experienced his spiritual presence and healing in some way, whether in church, school or on the gridiron. His spirituality and mission continues to resonate individually within each new generation.

For many hundreds of years 'miracles' have been viewed solely within the context of inexplicable medical cures. As our knowledge of science has grown, we now know that many 'miracles' are now quite easily explained; not all, obviously, but many. And some miracles can best be explained as unnatural events that occur naturally. Whether through ignorance or fear, the mind, that entity most important in governing our being, has never been viewed as a bodily organ in need of healing except within a biological context. In retrospect, sitting here in the 21st Century, one can only speculate on why such a narrow definition of 'miracle' has been used to demonstrate holiness.

Miracles occur every day at Boys Town—some small, others huge—but 'miracles' nonetheless. Unless you've been the victim of spiritual neglect, or chronic physical and emotional abuse as a child, you can't truly appreciate the difficulties and barriers in becoming emotionally healed. It's a process that requires a very special place, committed staff, and a spiritual font to nourish and heal the mind. Through Father Flanagan, all three have become an integral part of Boys Town. It's the type of miracle that goes unrecognized and unappreciated except by those of us who know what the alternative would have been; frightening to realize how badly our lives might have turned out, and awe-inspiring to know that only a miracle could have saved us...Father Flanagan's life was divinely inspired; he was selected by God for a very special mission: to bring help, healing and hope to children and families; **'miracles' of the heart and soul are as rare and real and relevant as 'medical miracles'.**

Father Flanagan League



Free Materials

- ◇ **Prayer cards**, prayer leaflets and guide lines for forming a prayer group for the cause
- ◇ **Photos, posters**
- ◇ **Poster/prayer in Spanish**
- ◇ **The Story of Father Flanagan**
- ◇ **Teaching unit** for children
- ◇ **Pilgrimage brochures**—a day at Father Flanagan local sites
- ◇ **Quarterly Newsletter**
- ◇ **Reprints** of selected writings

Prayer Groups

- ♥ **Second Tuesday** of each month, after the 11:40 a.m. Mass, Dowd Chapel, Boys Town

Presentations

- ◇ Available upon request
- ◇ Monday—Friday
- ◇ Daytime or evening
- ◇ Omaha Archdiocese area

Pilgrimages

- ◇ A day of prayer at Father Flanagan sites at Boys Town that includes mid-day Mass, lunch, time at the Visitors Center; Monday through Saturday

Contact

www.fatherflanagan.org

**Father Flanagan League:
Society of Devotion
14057 Flanagan Blvd.
Boys Town, NE 68010**

**Father Flanagan League:
Society of Devotion**

14057 Flanagan Blvd.
Boys Town, NE 68010

www.fatherflanagan.org



The first funeral service for Father Flanagan was held at Holy Rosary Church, Berlin, Germany.



One hundred Founders' Edition 18" miniatures have been cast of the Fred Hoppe statue of Fr. Flanagan. Some are still available for sale at \$1,850.00.

To reserve yours or request more information, call (800) 345-0458. Credit cards are accepted.

Non-Profit
Org. U. S. Post-
age **PAID**
Boys Town,

Father Flanagan League Prayer

God of mercy, love and compassion, we are grateful that You gave Your servant, Father Edward Joseph Flanagan special graces to love, protect and guide neglected, vulnerable and oppressed youth. Thank you that the work he began with the foundation of Boys Town has continued to spread throughout the world. We pray that you inspire many to adopt his caring, loving ways as mentor and protector of youth.

Loving Father, we bring our own needs to you now, asking that through the intercession of Father Flanagan, in accordance with your Holy Will, you grant these special favors: _____.

Thank You for Your Faithfulness and Providence, and for hearing these petitions which we ask in the Name of Your Son, Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**