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Father Flanagan



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Father Edward J. Flanagan
Founder of Boys Town, Nebraska

Father Flanagan League:
Society of Devotion

Prayer Leaflet

Year Three—July

From Father Flanagan's prayer for parents

O God, Creator and Redeemer of all the faithful, look down with gracious eye on the fathers and mothers of this world. Teach us, Dear Lord, to know and understand the high position which we as parents hold in Your Divine Plan of Creation—the guardianship of Your precious little ones.

Give us Dear Lord, the strength and patience to teach by example and precept our precious children and lead them along the paths of virtues, onward and upward towards You, their loving and All Gracious God. All this we ask through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.
Amen.

From his writing of April 1, 1946

Children are not born to be bad. They come unspoiled from the hand of God. It is our duty, as parents and members of society, to protect them from bad influences in the world where they grow to young womanhood and young manhood. We must not allow environmental influences to remove the look of hope which God has put in their eyes, nor the spark of enthusiasm which he has put in their hearts.

*We know that all things work for good
for those who love God:
who are called
according to his purpose.*

Romans 8.28

From Fr. Flanagan's writings

Part V of V of Father Flanagan's reflections

As I took my young gang from the courtroom I could feel the looks of sympathy which followed me. I knew that the judge felt I didn't know exactly what I was taking on myself. The ages of these boys were from 12 to 15 years...

First, I wanted the boys to forget that courtroom scene, and the misfortunes of the past. We were primarily interested in the future. Each one entered into the plans with all the enthusiasm of boyhood...As we talked I saw that my gang were just as fine as boys anywhere...I was fast filling my time with these groups, but I was never so interested in anything in my life. I had thought my hotel was about the most wonderful experiment anyone ever made, but these boys proved I was wrong. Here I was working with new clay. They had their lives before them...I took the boys at their word and they knew I trusted them. This honor system worked wonderfully.

With the hotel still on my hands, and my work in the parish, I could not keep up all these responsibilities. So I managed to get an interested young man in the neighborhood to supervise my boys on the evening which we had set for meetings...

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I found that once I had the confidence of a boy he would do anything rather than disappoint me. The appeal to his personal honor and integrity gave him a self-interest in his own welfare.

But how was one to win his confidence? The answer came with experience. Your very interest in the boy was the first step. By showing oneself an unselfish friend one invites confidence. One must likewise be prepared to make whatever sacrifice is necessary, no matter what it may be, for the welfare of the boys given into his care. One's patience may be tried to the breaking point, but what difference does it make if in the end he wins and saves a young life?

My unsatisfactory way of caring for the boys paroled to me was the best I could think of under the circumstances, but it took so much of

my time going back and forth, and I saw the boys but for a short time. I felt I could do much more for the boys if I could have them under my supervision all the time in some more satisfactory place. Many of them were weak-willed and their environments were constant temptations...My aim was to establish what would save these boys from reform schools, and from vice and crime.

Financially, I was just as poor as when I started my hotel. The work was still unknown and hence those who were financially able to help did not know of the needs. However, I did have the support of many who had helped with the establishment of the hotel, but the idea of a home for boys was then entirely unknown.

"God would provide." That was my great hope. Again I presented my plan to my ecclesiastical superior. He was pleased that my interest was turning to younger men and boys. He listened to my dreams, but when I had finished, he told me that if I began this home it must be on my own financial responsibility. The diocese was already supporting a large orphanage and could not be responsible for another. This, however, did not daunt me. I do not know whether it was a case of me not foreseeing my financial difficulties, or whether my youth dared to venture farther than wisdom advised. But I had no fears. And I went ahead with the blessing of this kindly man.

(Conclusion of Part V and series of Father Flanagan's reflections)

FATHER FLANAGAN PRAYER

God of mercy, love and compassion, we are grateful that You gave 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 us 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.