

The inadequacy of many state laws is only part of this great juvenile problem in the United States. In addition, there is the lack of the human element in which the law and not the child is upheld...

-Father Flanagan



**FOR INFORMATION OR TO REPORT FAVORS  
GRANTED  
CONTACT:**

Father Flanagan League  
14057 Flanagan Blvd.  
Boys Town, NE 68010

**[www.fatherflanagan.org](http://www.fatherflanagan.org)**

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**Father Steven E. Boes, Executive Director**



**Father Edward J. Flanagan**  
Founder of Boys Town, Nebraska

**Father Flanagan League:**  
Society of Devotion

Prayer Leaflet

Year Three—June

*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.

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*The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit  
that we are children of God, and if children,  
then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ,  
if only we suffer with him  
so that we may also be glorified with him.*

Romans 8.16

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## From Fr. Flanagan's writings

*Part IV of V of Father Flanagan's reflections.*

Often I sat in the court room and saw a frightened little boy from twelve to fifteen years old look at one of these detectives who was relating to the court an exaggerated account of the offence committed by the boy. The bitterness born in the boy's heart then toward all society often carried him on to life imprisonment.

How quickly these men had forgotten their own boyhood...I have pitied the judge on these occasion, who was forced by the existing customs and public opinion to face these boys day after day as they were brought into court for a short trial and then sentenced...Juvenile court judges discussed with me many times their sorrow at having to send young boys to reform school, who needed no 'reform' but there was no other place to send them. The parole system at that time was only in its infancy. Public opinion based on revenge yielded slowly to the more human treatment of erring boys. For each concession it made some boy paid the price.

The plight of these boys was deplorable. They were no worse than I might have been, had I been placed in similar circumstances. In face, I have often marveled at the goodness of these boys when one considered what they had to contend with.

There was something in the hopelessness of their lives, and in the treatment meted out to them which aroused in me a stirring desire to help them in any way I could. I discussed my idea for a home for these boys with my friends who were welfare-minded. They agreed that the present treatment was neither just nor good. Society owed these boys a fair start in life. Revenge was negative punishment. At best, it would do little for the boys.

What could I do then which would be of the utmost help?...I wanted each boy to have another chance under different circumstances. I believed that in this chance he might find his better self. I was usually on hand thereafter to plead for another chance for some boy who had got into trouble.

On one occasion I had three groups paroled to me. One of these groups was composed of boys from a good neighborhood, who had good families. They had gotten into trouble through bad companions, and complaints reached the juvenile officers. When the boys were brought in for trial the judge did not want to send all those boys to a reform school. Yet he could not send one without sending all. Up to this time, they had enjoyed a good name, and had been good boys.

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The judge had to do something with them. I was on hand and asked that the group be paroled to me. The judge looked at me, and then granted the request.

We had no place to meet, except in one of the city parks, or on a street corner. But I must see the boys regularly, so we arranged to meet one evening a week. At this time we discussed what the boys had been doing for the past week and the boys knew that I had to make a report to the judge on their conduct. It was up to them to make that report satisfactory.

It was remarkable that these boys entered into our contract with full cooperation. They knew that I had in a sense guaranteed their good behavior, and it would embarrass me before the judge if they broke their word to me. They also had had their lesson and were fully conscious of what they had been spared. They sensed my interest in their welfare, and knew I was their friend and big brother. Many a fine young man today owes his present good name and his position in society to the understanding judge who believed in a parole—the opportunity of another chance.

*(End of Part IV; Part V in Year Three—July)*

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## 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.