

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

-Father Flanagan



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

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

www.fatherflanagan.org

DONATIONS

**We are a federally recognized
501c3 nonprofit charitable organization
For religious purposes.
Donations may be made out
to FFLSD and sent
to the address above.**

Photos, prayers, writings of Father Flanagan
Used with permission of Boys Town Hall of History
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—May

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.

*For those who are led by the Spirit of God
are children of God.*

*For you did not receive a spirit of slavery
to fall back into fear.*

*but you received a spirit of adoption,
through which we cry, Abba, "Father!"*

Romans 8.14-15

From Fr. Flanagan's writings

Part III of V of Father Flanagan's reflections

I was anxious to have a home to offer to the boys who were brought into juvenile court, and who because they were homeless were sent to the reform school. This social injustice caused me more than one sleepless night.

I do not mean in any way to criticize the splendid men who sat on the juvenile court benches. I knew after talking with them that they were, for the most part, as opposed as I was to sending unfortunate boys to the reform school. We agreed that boys who were left homeless through the death or desertion of one or both parents, that boys who had had parents did not need reforming. There was no justification for punishing a boy and ruining his future because of his parents.

"You're right, Father," one of these judges said to me when we were discussing this problem. "These boys don't need punishment. Most of them need three square meals, a clean bed and someone interested enough in them to take care of them and give them an education. But what am I to do with them? They come in here after some little trouble, and where am I to send them? I can't send them home. In lots of cases that would be sending them back to more trouble. Some of them haven't any homes. What can I do, Father?"

He was right. There was little alternative. The fault was in the system. I had checked upon the records of some of the boys who had been to reform schools and were free again. I am sorry to say I saw little reform in them or in their conduct. Many came back hardened, and bitter. And they were pointed out as reform school graduates. This was thrown up to them when they sought work, and when they tried to take part in any community enterprises. In fact, I could see the justification of the saying that the reform schools were the stepping stones to the penitentiaries.

The good men in charge of these state institutions were no more at fault than the judges. Again it was the fault of the same system. It fell to the lot of the superintendents to carry out the rules and regulations which had been handed down by previous regimes, and which to a great extent were outlined by state law. They were just as much the victims, in a sense, as were the poor boys who were sent to them. They knew the boys were sent to them for punishment. They could give little individual help or counsel. The boys were grouped there and must be disciplined. If there was any revolt, the boy paid the price.

Untold harm was wrought by this system. Many fine young boys were sent up for minor delinquencies...without the aid of religious training, except what is allowed in a state-regulated school, the boys had little incentive to improve. There could be little of the inspirational training

which would tend to inspire a boy toward living better...And in spite of this evidence society continued without any thought of change to send its young boys to reform schools where their lives would be warped, and perhaps ruined.

Public opinion was another factor to contend with. It often demanded that the judge send boys to the reform school. For months I watched the procedure of these cases. The one thing which impressed me most was that the public which demanded revenge took no account of the effect their demands would have on the life of the boy.

I watched detectives of different companies here in the city bring boys into court and demand their punishment. No heed was taken of the boy's background. I was more angry with these heartless men, than with any misdeed the boy may have committed. They were unconcerned about the boy's future. All they were interested in was to see the boy convicted and sent to the reform school.

I was likewise surprised that they were so intent on treating the boy as if he were an adult criminal. They spoke of his misdeed as a crime, and acted as if the boy had been found guilty of a crime of first importance.

(End of Part III; Part IV in Year Three, June)

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.
