

Every child wants to think of himself as normal. There is nothing a child abhors like being considered different or apart from others. He will bridge the gaps in his underprivileged life by whatever means he can in order to make himself appear normal to others. - Fr. Flanagan



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

*Father Flanagan League:  
Society of Devotion*

Prayer Leaflet

Year Six—September

*Father Flanagan's Prayer at Central High School Youth Rally, April 30, 1940.*

Teach our young people, Dear Lord, the basic and essential truth on which their lives are to be built for You. Teach them to respect the authority vested by You in their parents and superiors who are in truth Your Divinely constituted representatives over them. Teach them to love, respect and obey their parents and superiors, and, thus guided by them by example as well as precept, these young people may develop a great spirit of reverence towards You, their God and Creator, and recognize their duties and obligations as expressed in Your Divine Commandments.

Dear Lord, sin and sorrow and suffering have come into the world and into the ranks of youth because of improper teaching and neglect of children...Help the young to understand better their duties and obligations that with this knowledge, they may go forth as missionaries for You to spread the Gospel of love and worship throughout the land. Give them the strength to become spiritual giants that they may accomplish grand and noble things by setting a fine example in their own personal lives as true children of You, their God and Creator.

O Holy Spirit, inspire the young that they may be capable of analyzing the causes which sometimes upset youth and reach conclusions that will bring peace and happiness. All this I ask in God's Holy Name. **Amen!**

*God is in his holy dwelling;  
he will give a home to the lonely,  
he gives power and strength to his people.*

*Psalm 67*

## From Fr. Flanagan's writings

*"Father Flanagan's Page," Father Flanagan's Boys Home Journal, January, 1933*

**Understanding a Boy:** In dealing with the homeless boys one never ceases to learn. As time goes on we see new methods and new means of helping them. There is one phase of the life of the homeless boy about which I would like to speak with all my friends. It is this: Every child wants to think of himself as normal. There is nothing a child abhors like being considered different or apart from others. He will bridge the gaps in his underprivileged life by whatever means he can in order to make himself appear normal to others.

For instance, the background of these boys: Most of my boys are here because of the death of one parent and the remaining one is unable to carry the burden. But when these boys think of their background they build in what life has deprived them of. One fine boy who was sent on a good placement recently had been in a n orphanage before coming to the Home more than three years ago. His mother died when he was a mere baby and the remaining parent left for parts unknown. But now this boy does not admit these facts. Instead he builds the father into a sort of hero and goes into his new home loaded with stories about the wonders of his father, their close association and all he has done for the boy. Why did he do this? Simply to justify his own position in the world, to build up a semblance of self-respect and to identify himself with boys from normal homes.

**Solving the Problem:** Now the question is how to manage this boy and how to treat the case? I would urge every foster parent who has taken a child who is old enough to realize his fate to be gentle and patient with him and to let him build his own fairy castles about the absent parents who oftentimes were not deserving of the name. In time, the boy will outgrow the obsession and will adjust his life to his new surroundings. But it requires above all else understanding of the emotion underlying the act, the motive for building what appears to others to be falsehoods. The child does not realize this, but foster parents should. It will help them understand the boy and be better parents. The sooner the foster home can take the place of the imaginary home in the boy's mind the sooner he will

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forget all about the "wonders" of those who left him or were taken from him. Gradually, the boy will build for himself a new set of ideals and in those ideals will be included the parents who have befriended him and given him the home which life thus far has denied him. If you have a boy, or contemplate taking a child into your home it will help you to remember this.

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Father Flanagan was Catholic to the core—not narrowly Catholic, concerned only about Catholics and Catholic issues. His faith had become a theology, a reasoned understanding and insight into the personal and social implications of what he believed. He had acquired something in those long stretches of aloneness that no seminary could have taught him: that priestly holiness means living under the very gaze of God. His ancient forebearers of Early Ireland called it "the hovering of God" and it fostered several generations of saints and scholars who transformed the world they lived in. Somehow a young boy with his books and his beads on the peat bogs and flowering heather of Ireland captured that vision and left behind a legacy as notable as theirs. —*Fr. Clifford Stevens*

## FATHER FLANAGAN PRAYER

**G**od 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.**