

These children are twigs of the same great tree of humanity, which will eventually grow to be healthy branches to bear good fruit, or they may be allowed to wither and produce thorns... -Fr. Flanagan



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Father Edward J. Flanagan
Founder of Boys Town, Nebraska

Father Flanagan League:
Society of Devotion

Prayer Leaflet

Year Three —April

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.

*'t will come to pass in the last days,' God says,
'that I will pour out a portion of my spirit upon all
flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your young men shall see visions,
your old men shall dream dreams.*

Acts 2.17

From Fr. Flanagan's writings

Part II of V, Fr. Flanagan's reflections

I saw these boys come in, in the custody of an officer and before long they were sentenced to the industrial school. There was no friend or relative in that court room to plead their case or ask the privilege of helping them. Wasn't there any other place for these boys but a juvenile prison? I couldn't see anything criminal about them. They were in rags, forlorn, hungry, boys. They needed a home, care, someone to teach them how to play and how to work and learn. They needed love and attention. Society was only making their lot harder and more difficult by placing on their young lives the stigma of a 'sentence.'

Often after the hearing I asked permission to talk with the boys. Gladly they told me their stories. I listened, and was more convinced than ever that what these boys needed was not a reform school, but a real home where they would have their chance.

I began comparing their stories with the stories my men had told me of their boyhood. And strangely there was much similarity. These boys were truants, just as the men had once been truants. They were caught in their first petty thieving. Many of the men had been caught and sent up. Then there followed the sequence of one more serious offence, capture, sentence, and perhaps later just a vagabond existence. I had heard hundreds of such stories. Now I knew I had come to a conclusion. I was working with the wrong period of life.

I had ample proof before my eyes every day at the hotel. I decided it would be better to help poor and neglected boys live well, than to spend my energy on temporary relief for those whose years of building were behind them.

I could see each day that my hotel was soon to be a thing of the past. It had served its purpose well. It had showed me the way—at least the way I thought was better. I proposed to my immediate friends this new idea of a home for boys. I had ample living proof of its needs. And I was more than surprised to find they heartily supported my plan.

Their enthusiasm added to my determination now to open a home where I could care for homeless and neglected boys, a home which would have no resemblance to a reform school or prison.

When the harvesters began coming in that fall of 1917, I was already making my plans to build. But this time it would be, not a hotel, but a home for those boys who needed a home.

The world progresses through the imagination and ideas of its people.

After I had definitely concluded to start a home for homeless and abandoned boys, a new enthusiasm took hold of me. I was looking for

these boys almost everywhere I went, and I almost found them. One could distinguish them by their ragged clothing and the look on their faces.

I was firmly convinced that the home I should start for these boys would be non-sectarian, would admit a homeless boy regardless of his race, or creed. This was the principle on which I operated my hotel, and it should be the same with the home.

Naturally, I began to look about for examples of such homes so that I might have some idea how to begin. I found orphanages, of course, in practically every city. And in the larger cities several. But the orphanage was maintained for the younger children and for infants. I discovered also that there were sectarian homes for boys, such as the ones lodges maintain, which are open only to the sons of members. They did not admit or care for the adolescent boy.

But at that time, I could not find an example of a home for boys which admitted a homeless and neglected boy without some string attached. I visualized a home where these older boys would be gathered together, be given care, an education and training, be taught how to work and how to play, and form a community of boys happy in the knowledge that they were no longer homeless.

(End of Part II; Part III in Year Three, May)

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.
