

## 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; we pray that through the intercession of Father Flanagan, in accordance with your Holy Will, You grant these special favors:

Thank You for Your Faithfulness and Providence, and for hearing our petitions which we ask in the Name of Your Son, Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

*The poor, innocent, unfortunate little children belong to us, and it is our problem to give them every chance to develop into good men and women.*

*Fr. Flanagan*



## Father Flanagan's Prayers for Parents

**O God**, Creator and Redeemer of all the faithful, look down with gracious eye on us 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!**

## Father Flanagan's Devotion to Mary

Father Flanagan prayed the rosary each evening in the chapel of the Immaculate Conception at Boys Town. Many of his boys and his staff often joined him. He invited his boys to daily consecrate themselves to Mary Immaculate:

“Here in Boys Town, you boys have in your daily program of prayers that beautiful consecration to Mary Immaculate: Blessed be the Mother of God, immaculately conceived! And may her prayers, so powerful because of her freedom from sin, gain for us what we so much need, and that through her intercession we will ever ask with confidence—a more perfect pardon for past sin, a greater security against future falls, an increased love for God, and the gift of a happy death.”

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*For additional information, to be added to our mailing list, or to report favors granted, write to:*

**Father Flanagan League: Society of Devotion**  
**A 501c3 non-profit religious organization**  
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**Boys Town, NE 68010**  
**Phone (402) 498-3056**  
**[www.fatherflanagan.org](http://www.fatherflanagan.org)**

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



*Father*  
*Edward J. Flanagan*

*1886-1948*

*Founder of Boys Town, Omaha, Nebraska*

*“Our young people are our greatest wealth.  
Give them a chance and they will give  
a good account of themselves.”*

*Fr. Flanagan*

# Father Flanagan League: Society of Devotion Boys Town National Alumni Association

## The Story of Father Flanagan

Edward J. Flanagan was born July 13, 1886 on a farm in Leabeg, County Roscommon, Ireland, two miles southeast of Ballymoe, County Galway. He was the eighth of John and Nora Flanagan's eleven children. In 1904 he began a long struggle to become a priest. Despite overt discrimination against the Irish, poor health and low expectations from his professors, he stayed faithful to his dream. After arriving in America in 1909, he returned to Europe where he was ordained with the Jesuits at the Royal Imperial Leopold Francis University, Innsbruck, Austria on July 26, 1912.

Upon his return to Omaha, he was assigned to St. Patrick's Parish in O'Neill, Nebraska and then to St. Patrick's Church in Omaha where he began his work with homeless men. He opened the Workingmen's Hotel in the winter of 1915, housing about 75 men per night. When assigned to St. Philomena's parish, he moved the hotel to Livesay Flats where he could house over 300 men each night. On October 1, 1916 he began his ministry with boys when he helped a boy reunite with his family in Kansas City. On December 12, 1917, he officially founded Father Flanagan's Boys' Home which moved to different sites until Overlook Farm was purchased on May 18, 1921. By 1925 the Home had provided care to 1,790 boys from 29 states and 25 nationalities; 1,100 were Protestant, 626 Catholic and 57 Jewish. In his lifetime, Father Flanagan cared for over 19,000 boys in the Home and influenced the care of vulnerable youth throughout the world.

His international ministry included visits to Japan to establish care for children orphaned by World War II, and a fact-finding mission for President Truman in war-torn Europe. While in Berlin, Father Flanagan died of a massive heart attack on May 15, 1948. He is buried on the Omaha Boys Town campus in Dowd Chapel.

At the October 7, 2001, dedication of the Father Flanagan statue in Ballymoe, Ireland, Father Val Peter, then Executive Director of Boys Town, said that Father Flanagan "Often talked about the miracle of the heart. What takes place the day you decide I'm going to make a difference...I'm

going to be an image of what the Lord wants me to do... Father Flanagan said that the head without the heart is pure manipulation; the heart without the head is pure sentimentality."

Today, Boys Town cares for over 35,000 youth on its 19 campuses, and annually impacts over a million youth through its various programs.

## From a speech given by Father Flanagan to the Ancient Order of Hibernians Indianapolis, Indiana - March 12, 1939

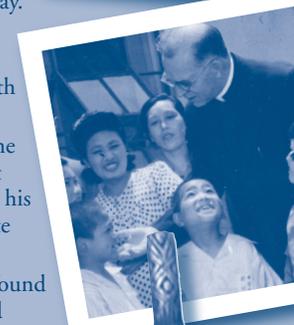
In 432 A.D., when Saint Patrick arrived at Tara...It had been forbidden, under pain of death, to light a fire until the great national fire at Tara was burning...those great chieftains... were stricken with amazement and dismay to glance up at the hill of Slane...and see a fire burning...the fire they saw ... was the paschal fire, lit that Easter eve by Saint Patrick, and from the hill of Slane, the fire of Christianity and Christian culture has spread steadily and burned brightly in the hearts of the Irish people...I have always liked that story of Saint Patrick lighting his fire...on a hill where all might see. That took courage... real faith, and a boundless confidence that God's work would be done...

I want to ask you to light, in your own individual hearts, a fire of Christian feeling for all those children, abused, abandoned, homeless, wherever they are found...the children who, tomorrow...carry on from where we have left off... I like to think of Boys Town as an experimental station in youth work...as the Slane Hill from which a light of consideration and understanding of the youth of our land may spread out in a wide circle to every city and hamlet... bringing with it true happiness and a sound future for the land we love and the children who will be called upon to insure that future...

I call upon you to light in your hearts a fire of understanding and sympathy, of helpfulness and appreciation for the citizens of tomorrow, the youth of today.

## Signs of Holiness in Father Flanagan

- **His total dedication** to the care and development of youth in need flowed out of a deep spiritual conviction that Christ called him to his priesthood and this ministry.
- **He was a man of deep and constant prayer** who urged others who worked with him to give themselves to prayer.
- **His spiritual vision and dedication** created a community of loving concern in the adults who were inspired to share their lives and talents with him in the service of youth.
- **His work ran contrary** to the common convictions and attitudes toward youth in need in society at that time.
- **His charisma of Fatherly Love** transformed the lives of many youth in his time and continues to this day.
- **Confronted by criticism and harsh judgments** on the part of his fellow Catholics, he reacted with patience and renewed dedication.
- **In a time of crisis**, when the Home was adjusting to new demands put upon it by deeply damaged youth, his perceived presence was the ultimate guiding norm.
- **Both his person and work** have found a responsive echo in the hearts and minds of people all over the world.
- **Upon becoming a national celebrity**, he retained a humble opinion of himself, available to those who needed his presence.
- **He was prophetic in fearlessly** proclaiming his conviction that there is no such thing as a bad boy, a statement which grew out of his faith vision.
- **He revolutionized the way America perceived** and treated its vulnerable youth.
- **At a time when society maintained deep** religious and ethnic prejudices, he ignored conventional beliefs, focusing only on a child's humanity. He was the first nationally recognized figure of his time to directly confront racial prejudice.
- **While he never enjoyed robust health**, he did not allow his fragile health to prevent him from full dedication to his work.



Journey of Holiness