

# Father Flanagan

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 3

SUMMER, 2005



## *Father Flanagan Says*

The child is not born bad. It is not born to be bad. The boy who makes mistakes is a spiritually sick boy. He is the victim of bad environment, bad training, bad example. In sort, he is a product of neglect. A person who goes ill-clad into the snow and cold becomes sick with pneumonia. But who would see to cure his illness by forcing him again into the snow and cold? And yet some people think a boy who has become a social misfit as a result of being ill-treated can be

socialized by more mistreatment...The maladjusted boy is just as sick in heart and mind as if he had pneumonia. He is in need of expert care and attention... Education must always be constructive, leading to self-expression in harmony with one's environment and in co-operation with others...Love and understanding are necessary to accomplish this, by co-operating with the individual, by making him feel that he is accepted, by inviting his reciprocal co-operation and goodwill.

*(Irish Digest, January, 1947)*

## *About Father Flanagan*

*-Toshio James Takahashi*

After Pearl Harbor, myself, my wife, and my three children had to go to the Japanese detention camp at the Santa Anita Racetrack...there was a rumor that Father Flanagan needed help...he needed someone to maintain the grounds and start a vegetable farm to feed the kids. I wrote a letter to him, he wrote a letter back saying, "Come on out."

When I arrived at Boys Town, Father Flanagan came up and greeted me, he hugged me, he was very, very loving. All the people in Nebraska were wonderful, we had friends who were Italians, Germans, all nationalities, and they didn't care what nationality we were...

Many of the boys acted so tough, like they didn't care at all, but they all cared. They all wanted to be near Father Flanagan. Father Flanagan called everyone "dear." and he was really a father to each boy. He had candy in his pocket at all times, and he would hand this out to the kids.

I never heard anyone call men "dear" like Father. Father Flanagan made you feel like you were his favorite, everyone was his favorite. He was radiant, you would look at him and just love him.

*(From an interview, March 8, 1988; Jim, who was born in Los Angeles, returned there with his family in 1947. Many of the mature trees you see today on the grounds at Boys Town were planted by Jim.)*

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### FATHER FLANAGAN



**Born** July 13, 1886, Leabeg Farm, Co. Roscommon near Ballymoe, County Galway, Ireland.

\*

**Ordained**, July 26, 1912, Innsbruck, Austria.

\*

**Founded** Father Flanagan's Boys' Home, 25th & Dodge, Omaha, December 12, 1917.

\*

**Moved** Home to German-American Home, South 13th St., Omaha, June 1, 1918.

\*

**Moved to** Overlook Farm (present site) October 17, 1921.

\*

**Invested as** a monsignor, November 21, 1937.

\*

**World premiere** of movie, "Boys Town," September 7, 1938.

\*

**Assessed** the child care system in native Ireland on visit there, June, 1946.

\*

**Met** General MacArthur in Japan to develop care program for war orphans.

\*

**Sent to** Europe by President Truman to aide war orphans. February 26, 1948.

\*

**Died** May 15, 1948, Berlin, Germany

## Meet the Advisory Council



*Maureen Brady, Sharon Nelsen, Madeleine Leininger  
Steve Wolf, Dan Shields*



*Ed Flanagan, New Chairperson  
with his Great Uncle  
Father Edward J. Flanagan*

On July 31, 1999, the BTNAA initiated the promotion of the holiness of Father Flanagan, and in 2001, invited **Sharon Nelsen** to help promote the cause.

With growth has come the need to reorganize: **Ed Flanagan**, BTNAA Chairman for the League on the Alumni Board, has been elected as Chairman of the Advisory Council which works with the BTNAA and acts as spokesman for the League. **Bob Nelson**, President of the BTNAA, is pleased with the efforts thus far and commends those members of the Advisory Committee for their dedication, faith, and willingness to work on this worthy project. Bob has challenged the membership of the BTNAA to become more involved in each of their communities on this very important alumni mission.

Alumni Family representative, **Mary Kuhn**, stepped off the Advisory Council due to other obligations, but she will continue to head up the St. Patrick's Day float entry. Thanks, Mary, for your generous support and hard work.

## WELCOME! Father Boes

*The work continues because it is  
God's work...*

As we say good-by and thank you to Father Val Peter, Director of G&BT since 1984, we greet incoming Father Steven E. Boes, the fifth director of The Home founded by Father Flanagan in 1917.

Father Boes continues the legacy strengthened by Monsignor Nicholas Wegner, extended to girls and resident cottage living by Monsignor Robert Hupp, and spread to 20 Boys Town USA sites in 16 states by Father Val Peter. We welcome Fr. Peter's ongoing support of the Father Flanagan League as pastor of Dowd.

## On the Air!

**Spirit 88.9 FM Catholic Radio Station KVSS** is preparing to launch 12 Father Flanagan canonization vignettes this month. The segments were recorded at the studio earlier this year by Alumni Ed Flanagan, Dan Shields, Andy Dopheide, Michael Walker, Steve Wolf, and Sara Cambridge (first girl mayor of G&BT). The voice of Father Flanagan chooses to remain anonymous.

Our heartfelt thanks to **KVSS** station manager **Jim Carroll**, Program Director **Bruce Mac Gregor** and assistant **T. Scott Marr** for giving us this opportunity to share the good news of Father Flanagan with their radio audience. And thanks to **Tom Lynch**, Boys Town Hall of History for use of Father Flanagan materials.

## Father Flanagan League



### Free Materials

- ◇ **Prayer cards**, prayer leaflets and guide lines for forming a prayer group for the cause, brochure
- ◇ **Photos, posters**
- ◇ **Poster/prayer in Spanish**
- ◇ **Story of Father Flanagan**
- ◇ **Teaching unit** for children
- ◇ **Pilgrimage brochures**
- ◇ **Quarterly Newsletter**
- ◇ **Reprints** of selected writings

### Prayer Groups

- ♥ **Second Tuesday** of each month, after the 11:40 a.m. Mass, Dowd Chapel, Boys Town

### Presentations

- ◇ Available upon request
- ◇ Monday—Friday
- ◇ Daytime or evening
- ◇ Omaha Archdiocese area

### Pilgrimages

- ◇ A day of prayer at Father Flanagan sites at Boys Town that includes mid-day Mass, lunch, Monday — Friday

### Contact

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

**Father Flanagan League:  
Society of Devotion  
14057 Flanagan Blvd.  
Boys Town, NE 68010**

## Monthly Prayer Group and Blessings



On second Tuesdays, following the 11:40 Mass, we gather in the Shrine with Monsignor Dunne to pray for Girls and Boys Town, for the canonization of Father Flanagan and for each other's personal needs. Since August 2002, three to 55 people have gathered each month to pray that Father Flanagan may be given his rightful place in the universal Church. In Ireland, two groups meet monthly: in Ballymoe at St. Croan's with Fr. Frank Egan, CSSP, and in Sligo at St. Mary's Cathedral with Fr. Alan Conway. (See article, Page 7)

In April, the Becerra family gathered after the 11:40 Mass to ask Father Flanagan to intercede for Rick Becerra who was diagnosed with MS last year. Monsignor Dunne also blessed each member of the family that day. (Left photo) Henry Becerra of Boys Town Print Shop, and son, Rick, pray with Monsignor Dunne as he blesses Henry's grandson, Christopher Zyla. (Right photo) Rick recently reported many graces received, including the fact that he is feeling better physically. Please pray with us as we continue to intercede for Rick's total healing.



When you pray, asking Father Flanagan's intercession, and the situation improves, or new strength is found to live with the ongoing difficulties/challenges, that is a **grace received**. In the canonization process, testimonies of **graces received** are very important. When you share your **grace received**, it builds up the community of faith. Share your grace received by calling us at 402.498.3056, or writing to us at BTNAA, Movement for Canonization, P.O. Box 2, Boys Town, NE 68010, or sending an e-mail to: [prayer@fatherflanagan.org](mailto:prayer@fatherflanagan.org)

## *Pilgrims tread the Same Ground Father Flanagan Made Holy*



*Sister Irene Dvorak, ND, (2nd left) with friends from St. Rose of Lima, Genoa, NE, December 9, 2004*



*Colleen Gavley, Cindy Altepeter and Lexi Mann, April 5, 2005*



*Cori Wall (2nd left) of Mount Michael Abbey with his grandmother, mother, and Kate Fleming with two visitors —March 19, 2005*



*↑ St. John the Baptist, Fort Calhoun, NE  
October 19, 2004,  
(the day Johnny arrived at Boys Town from Iraq)*

*Confirmation Class, Dodge-Howells NE,  
November 11, 2004 →*

*This was our first group of Confirmation students. Boys Town Alumnus Steve Wolf (far right) participated as a guide, as did alumni Ed Flanagan and Dan Shields.*

*Before and after prayer at each site, the students heard many of Father Flanagan's own teachings for youth as well as some Boys Town stories from the alumni.*



## *What is a Pilgrimage?*

**Lexi Mann**, who owns and runs the tour company "Special Journeys," told us how she differentiates between tours and pilgrimages:

"Tours and pilgrimages are two separate things. One is simply an "all about" while the other challenges people to endeavor to find meaning in what they're doing through Christ. The two serve different purposes and therefore different groups of people. Truly there are people who would tour the grounds, but would never consider making a pilgrimage—and vice versa. The two can easily co-exist."

## St. James/Seton Fifth-Graders on Pilgrimage

On April 25, two busloads of fifth graders from St. James/Seton school in Omaha, made a pilgrimage. We divided the group of 86 into four smaller groups and assigned a guide and a starting place for each, converging at Dowd Chapel for the 11:40 A.M. Mass. Below are a few excerpts from the 86 thank you notes we received from the students. (We'll publish the photo for Group 2, (Guide Ed Flanagan) and more thank you notes in our next issue.)



Group 3

Thank you for letting us come to Boys Town. I didn't know that the boys liked to go to Boys Town. Thanks a bunch.

*Morgan*



Group 1

What I learned most of all was that Fr. Flanagan did as much as he could for the boys, and loved them so much...

Sincerely, *Alex*

I liked the movie in the Hall of History the best. I learned that the kids at Boys Town are just like us.

Sincerely, *Matt*



Group 4

I liked when we prayed in Father Flanagan's tomb. I learned about the desk that the boys made. They must have been real creative. Thanks again, Sincerely, *Andy*

I really was shocked when I found out that Fr. Flanagan's tomb was in the church! You know, it's not everyday you come across a dead person buried in a church! So, thanks again, *Michaela*

I thought Father Flanagan was a really cool person. He helped a lot of people. My favorite part was the Hall of History. My other favorite part was the Chapel where Father Flanagan was buried. I had so much fun! Thanks a lot,

*Cassie*

The thing I liked the most was going around Fr. Flanagan's house. I never knew that people can go to Boys Town when they aren't being bad...Thank you again!

Sincerely, *Stacy*

*It was especially rewarding to have you, an alumni, as our guide. The stories and background were so interesting and touching...there are a lot of lessons to be learned from this experience...You can count on my prayers for all of you at Boys Town and your mission...and the canonization of Father Flanagan.*

—Nancy Gomez, parent, to Steve Wolf, Guide for Group 3.

I loved seeing all of the neat things at Girls and Boys Town. I loved seeing where Father Flanagan is buried. I never knew that there was a museum there...Thank you so much, I plan on taking my family soon. I will bring my church allowance money to donate...

Sincerely, *Michael*



*Friends of alumni carrying on the tradition*

*(Right side) Marty McCaslin as Father Flanagan with alumni families and friends:  
(Left side) Father Flanagan's grandnephew, Jim Flanagan ('83) with his son, Sean.*

# P A R A D E



For the third consecutive year, the BTNAA participated in Omaha's annual St. Patrick's Day Parade, March 13th in the Old Market area. The parade project is headed by Advisory Committee member, **Mary Kuhn**, daughter of Boys Town alumnus, Martin Kuhn ('39) and niece of one of Boys Town priest alumnus, Father Leo Kuhn ('38).

Many alumni and friends helped to transport, decorate and tear down the float that day. They rode on the float or walked alongside to distribute candy and the Father Flanagan prayer for parents bookmark to the crowds. **Bob Curtin** ('58) of Kansas City, **Andy Dopheide** ('88) and family of Omaha, **Ed Flanagan** ('81), **Steve Wolf** ('80) and family and **Stan Struble** ('68), **Dan Shields** ('78), **Sheila Cornett** ('89), **Barb Nelson**, daughter of **Dave Nelson** and niece of **Bob Nelson**, **Paula Ruh**, daughter of **Mo Szynskie** ('47), and **Matt Valenzuela** ('85), were among alumni present that day. Cool damp weather made it an Irish day for all!

## *Irish Prayer Groups' First Father Flanagan Retreat*



We had a great Mini Retreat last Sunday, 5th June at Galilee House, Boyle, Co. Roscommon. We had 21 participants and two priests for the first ever Fr. Flanagan Retreat from 2:15 P.M. to 5:45 P.M. which included two talks, the Rosary, video and audio presentation, tea break, group photograph, and Sunday Mass. Fr. Pat Lombard (*left front*) was Retreat Director for the day.

We hope to have one again next year. It went very well, and the next step is to invite the Sligo group to Ballymoe to visit during the Summer. Our Church Gate Collection is on Saturday and Sunday 18th/19th June, 2005. Our Anniversary Mass for birth of Fr Flanagan is on Wednesday, July 13, 2005. We take a break from meetings for August. That's all for now.

Regards,

Fr. Conway.  
Cathedral of Immaculate Conception,  
St Mary's Presbytery,  
Sligo

*Editor's Note: Under the guidance and with the participation of Fr. Alan Conway, and with the strong support of Bishop Christopher Jones of the Sligo Diocese, the Irish launched the first Father Flanagan prayer group on the first Friday of July, 2002, at Father Flanagan's home parish, St. Croan's in Ballymoe, County Galway. When Fr. Conway was transferred to the Cathedral at Sligo (where Father Flanagan had attended school at nearby Summerhill College), he began a second prayer group that also meets monthly. Fr. Frank Egan, CSSP, pastor of St. Croan's, though very active in the Ballymoe group, was unable to attend the retreat due to illness.*

**Father Flanagan League:  
Society of Devotion**

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Writings and Photos used  
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Boys Town Hall of History

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One hundred Founders' Edition 18" miniatures have been cast of the Fred Hoppe statue of Fr. Flanagan. A few are still available for sale at \$1,850.00.

To reserve yours or request more information, call **800.345.0458**. Credit cards are accepted.

## *League Prayer*

**G**od of mercy, love and compassion, we are grateful that You gave Your servant, 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 these special favors:

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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.**

## *Pilgrimages*

In April of 2004, we began offering pilgrimages to Father Flanagan's sites at Boys Town. Since that time, over 260 pilgrims have prayed at Flanagan House, Chambers Chapel, and Dowd Chapel, for the current citizens of Girls and Boys Town, for the staff, for the alumni, for parents, and for the canonization of Father Flanagan.

The pilgrimages begin at various sites, depending on the weather conditions, but always include Hall of History to view the short film, praying at the other sites, joining the Dowd Chapel group for pre-mass rosary, attending the 11:40 Mass and concluding with prayer at Father Flanagan's Shrine. The pilgrimage may include lunch at the Visitors' Center, a browse through the adjacent Gift Shop, and a return to spend more time at any site.

To schedule a pilgrimage for your family, church group, friends or class, contact us through our website.

**Thanks to Spirit 88.9 FM Catholic Radio (KVSS) for publicizing our pilgrimages!**