

# Father Flanagan

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

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 1

2007—FIRST QUARTER

## Father Flanagan Says—1937



My boys have come to me from homes of poverty and neglect, they have come to me from broken homes, they have come from homes where tragedy has taken their mothers and fathers, they have come to me without a name—nameless little waifs left on somebody's doorstep, they have come from courts condemned by the world as useless and no good, they have come from all parts of the world but they are all my boys, my sons. I love them, each and every one

and they have proven their worth for not one has failed. Yes, I am proud, proud of my sons as is every father. I give them to society as useful citizens, honored and respected men. May God bless them. *(Photo of Father Flanagan with Donald Roybal, BT Class of 1940, in postwar Germany, April 14, 1948)*

## About Father Flanagan

*From the Boys Town Times, May 23, 1947, by Joe Schrantz, Class of 1947*

Ability, training and Unselfishness. These are the qualities necessary to make a great leader. Almost all leaders have ability and training, but few possess the quality of unselfishness.

Father Flanagan is a great leader of boys. He has the ability and training, but above all, Father Flanagan is unselfish. It is through his unselfishness that our class of forty-one boys is graduating from Father Flanagan's Boys Town.

We at Boys Town owe so much to Father Flanagan. If there were no such man as Father Flanagan, many of us would not have a high school education. Some of us might even be in a reform school. Perhaps we would be selling papers on a street corner struggling for our existence. But thanks to Father, we are not doing any of those things. Instead we are graduating from an accredited school, we have a good solid Christian training, we participate in all kinds of sports and we are as healthy as any boy in America.

Father Flanagan's most famous quotation is: "There is no such thing as a bad boy. There is only bad example, bad parenting, bad environment." It is strange, indeed, that it took the human race thousands of years to find out that no boy is really bad. Now that people all over the world are beginning to realize this, thanks to Father Flanagan, we may hope for a more successful future of mankind.

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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.

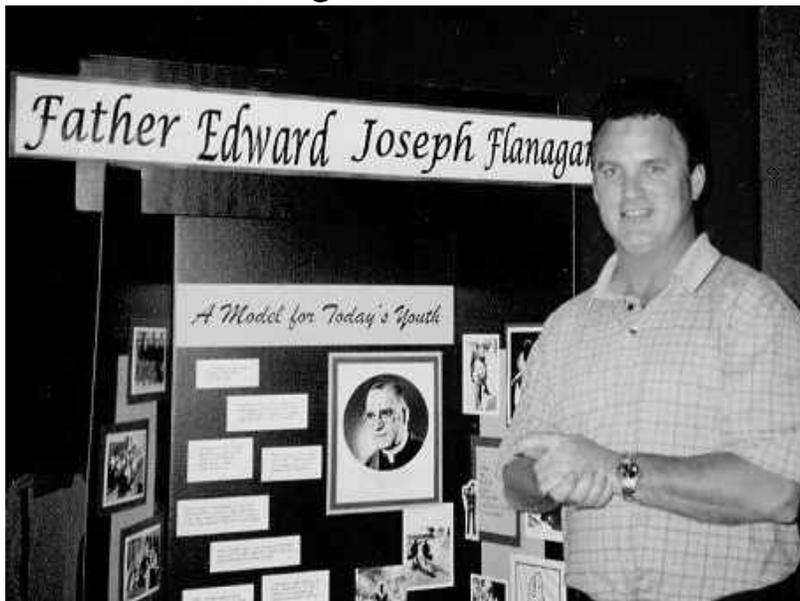
\*

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

\*

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

## From Ed Flanagan, Chairman



*Ed Flanagan, Chairman, with display at annual Fall meeting of Archdiocesan Catholic Schools Teachers. The display was designed and organized by Maureen Brady.*

The annual Fall meeting of the Archdiocesan Catholic School's Teachers was held at Creighton Preparatory High School in Omaha, Nebraska on October 13, 2006. This was our fourth consecutive appearance at this event. The Catholic School's Teacher

Conference provides an opportunity for Teachers and Administrators to exchange ideas, make presentations and pray for guidance and wisdom as they teach the students in their care. This is a fantastic forum for the Fr. Flanagan League: Society of Devotion to spread the word of Father Flanagan's life and work throughout the Archdiocese.

This year Maureen Brady and Dan Shields, '78 ran our booth most of the day. I was able to provide limited relief during the day and was greatly inspired by the people I met who were very interested in what we had to offer. The conference, which was attended by over 1,300 people, afforded us an excellent venue to continue to expand our groundswell movement making more people aware of Father Flanagan's holiness.

We passed out hundreds of Fr. Flanagan League: Society of Devotion prayer cards, prayer for parents card, and the very popular Teaching Unit—a booklet about the life and works of Fr. Flanagan and the canonization process. This packet was created by two very dedicated members of our Advisory Board: Sharon Nelsen and Maureen Brady.

In the packet we invite teachers to bring their students to Boys Town for a spiritual pilgrimage. This spiritual journey through Boys Town is the heart and soul of our work. At each site we spend time reading from Fr. Flanagan's writings, praying and listening to alumni share personal testimonies about how Fr. Flanagan and the Home have literally saved their lives. In good weather we walk from site to site, which includes Father Flanagan's tomb in Dowd Memorial Chapel, Chamber's Chapel, Father Flanagan's Home and the Hall of History.

We encourage any group or organization who would like to experience one of our spiritual journeys, contact our website: [www.fatherflanagan.org](http://www.fatherflanagan.org)

*Ed*

### **Father Flanagan League Society of Devotion**

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Boys Town Hall of History

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



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.

## *Members of the Father Flanagan Advisory Council Holiday Meeting*



*Front row seated—Madeleine Leininger, Ed Flanagan, Monsignor Peter Dunne  
Back row—Maureen Brady, Reggie and Lois Welles, Sharon Nelsen*

On December 11, 2006, members of the Father Flanagan Advisory Council met with Monsignor Peter Dunne, Spiritual Advisor to the Council, for mass and a luncheon.

Included in the gathering was Lois Welles, wife of Council member, Reggie Welles.

Due to conflict with work schedules, members Dan Shields and Steve Wolf were unable to attend.

The Advisory Council expresses gratefulness to Monsignor Dunne for his faithfulness and strong support of the Father Flanagan League over the years. From his first assignment as a priest at Boys Town with Father Flanagan, until the present day, our dear Father Dunne has shared his heart fully with all.

## *Father Flanagan KVSS Radio Series Wins Award*

When the Father Flanagan League formed, Advisory Council members decided the best way to spread the word about the life and works of the holy Founder of Boys Town, was through Father Flanagan's own words. After reading scripts from Father Flanagan's radio shows, we were inspired to come up with a series of radio "spots" that would spread the story of this great man.

We spoke with KVSS Radio Station manager, Jim Carroll about the idea, and were encouraged to submit a format. Upon approval, the work began and soon the series of twelve spots was written.

We found the voices in Alumni Sarah Cambridge, Ed Flanagan, Steve Wolf, Michael Walker, and the theme music in "He Ain't Heavy" from the 1979 Boys Town recording, "Boys Town Sings America." Advisory Council member, Maureen Brady led us to the perfect Father Flanagan voice in Dr. Barry Murphy of Creighton University.

T. Scott Marr supervised recording and completed the challenging task of editing the series.



*T. Scott Marr, program editor, KVSS, and Sharon Nelsen, writer, with award. plaque for excellence in journalism*

# Pilgrimages

*Pilgrims tread the same ground Father Flanagan made holy*



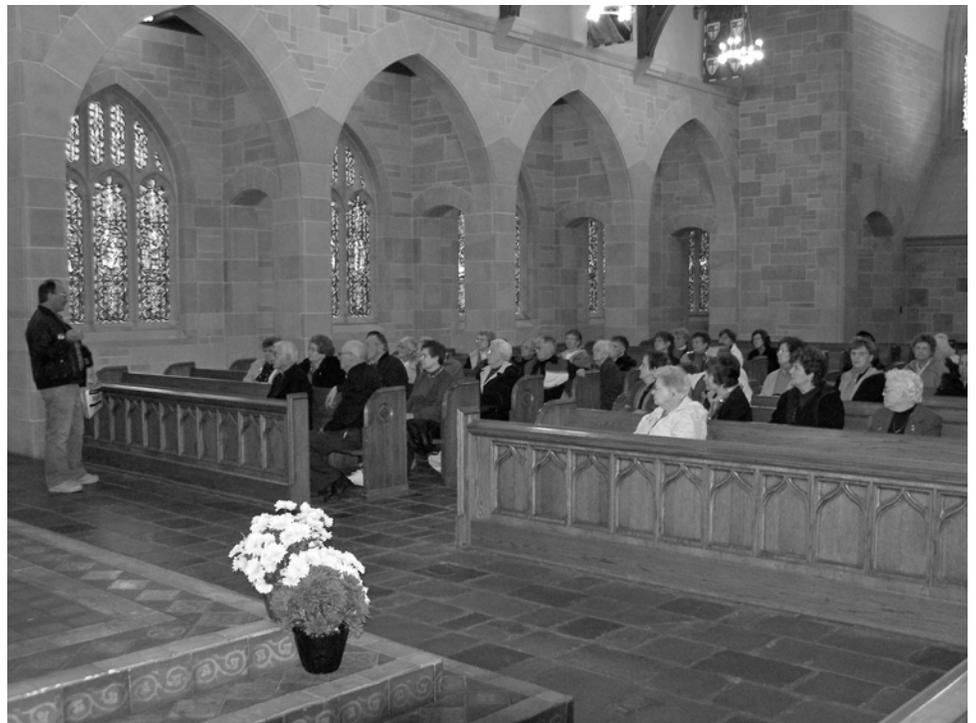
*Legion of Mary, Carroll, Iowa, October 18, 2006*

## *The Pilgrimage Day*

Every pilgrimage includes prayers at Chambers Chapel for the living and deceased staff of Boys Town.

It is also a time to talk about Father Flanagan's post-war missions to the Orient and to Germany and for the Boys Town Alumni guides to share their stories with the pilgrimage group.

In the photo to the right, Reggie Welles, BT Class of 1957, tells his story to the Carroll Iowa Legion of Mary members in Chambers Chapel.



## Presentations

Part of our ongoing ministry to spread devotion to Father Flanagan includes giving presentations to various groups in the Archdiocese.

Members of our Advisory Council, upon request, offer a half hour to a one hour talk on the life and works of Father Flanagan and the progress of the groundswell movement.

Our latest presentation was to a group of young mothers in the St. Vincent de Paul Parish MOM's group. The photo at the right is of two alumni presenters, Reggie Welles, 1957, and Steven Wolf, 1979, and MOM's member, Steffi Bloc.

In November of 2005, the MOM's group invited us for our first presentation at St. Vincent de Paul. At that time, Steffi Bloc, a native of Germany, came forward after the event and offered to search the web for any information about Father Flanagan on German sites. She said that she remembered her own Father talking about Father Flanagan, and she knew he had monetarily supported various Father Flanagan inspired homes in Germany after the war. She thought there must be something about Father Flanagan on the German web sites.

Steffi did the research and discovered the German site, "Deauscht Flanagan"—a group of various child care professionals who are inspired by the Founder of Boys Town. Additionally, Steffi discovered that there is a street in Berlin named after Father Flanagan. The web site is complete with his photo and biography.

Thank you, Steffi, for following your inspiration and sharing your discoveries with us.



*Reggie Welles, Steffi Bloc, Steve Wolf  
Presentation at St. Vincent de Paul MOM's group  
November 7, 2006*

### *The Presentation Format*

1. Introductions
2. Where we are in the process of spreading devotion to Father Flanagan.
3. History of the alumni inspiration to begin the process and the ongoing commitment.
4. Testimonies of alumni
5. Selected reading from the writings of Father Flanagan
6. Signs of Holiness in Father Flanagan; about miracles
7. Closing prayer

*Presentations are offered Monday through Saturday, daytime or evening. To schedule a presentation for your group, please contact our website: [www.fatherflanagan.org](http://www.fatherflanagan.org)*

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Another famous statement by Father Flanagan: "Punishing our boys and girls will not eliminate the causes of their mistakes. A stronger padlock does not make a better boy." This is one of the main reasons I like Boys Town so much. When one of the fellows gets into some minor trouble, he is reprimanded by Father Flanagan or a person authorized by Father. He then is given a little work which he must complete within a certain time.

Few boys of Boys Town are constantly getting into trouble. I do not know what it is that keeps the boys living in such rhythmic harmony. Perhaps it is the embarrassment of getting caught, perhaps the boys do not like the work given them if they get caught, or maybe the boys just don't want to offend Father Flanagan. Whether it be any of these three things, nevertheless, the boy seldom gets into mischief more than once. Now all this adds up to one thing. When Father Flanagan deals with boys, he knows what he is doing.

There is never an idle moment spent by Father Flanagan. He rises early to say Mass, has his breakfast and immediately goes to his office for his day's work. His work is frequently interrupted by his boys who come to see him for advice at any time. Father never turns his boys away. When a boy leaves Father's office after a heart-warming chat, the fellow feels as if he is on

top of the world. It is that certain inspiration that only Father Flanagan can give to those in need of help.

Father Flanagan is an expert at settling arguments between the boys. One day one of the smaller boys walked into Father's office with his hand over his eye trying to conceal a nasty shiner. Father asked him how he got his eye banged up. The boy told him he won some marbles from an older boy and that this older fellow got mad and laid one on him. Father immediately sent for the "brute" and talked to him for awhile, then told him to come back in about an hour. In the meantime Father sent for a barrel of marbles that had just come in through contributions and had them put in front of his desk. When the boy returned and saw all those marbles, his eyes almost popped out. Yes, Father Flanagan gave all those marbles to this boy and believe me, that fellow never had to come and see Father Flanagan again about getting into trouble.

We seniors of Boys Town are indebted to Father Flanagan for his loving kindness, guidance and care he has given us throughout these past few years we have spent in Boys Town. We can attribute our present and future success to the many prayers and constant efforts of Father Flanagan...



*Jerome Starr, Class of 1952*

My name is Jerome Starr and I was a citizen of Boys Town from 1946 until 1952. I am sometimes asked if I knew Father Flanagan. My response is "yes" but only from a distance except for one encounter.

When I arrived in Boys Town in September of 1946, I was a pretty lonely 12 year old little boy. I was assigned to Building 1 and every morning after breakfast we returned to the dorm to do our chores. Since I was the new kid I was given some light task until I learned what to do. For the first few weeks I would complete my task and get out of the building so I wouldn't be in the way. I would go over to the front of the Chapel, sit on the steps, and watch the cars and trucks go by on Highway 30 at the bottom of the hill.

One morning a priest came out of the rectory and saw me sitting there. I was afraid that I was in trouble for being there. I said "Good morning Father." He said something like "Hello dearie, who are you and what are you doing here?" I told him who I was, that I was done with my chores, and that I was watching the cars and trucks on the road until time for school. He asked me if I was thinking about leaving and I told him that I wasn't, that I was just there to stay out of the way while the other boys did their chores. About that time we noticed the other boys going to school so we started to walk in that direction. It was not until later that I found out that the kind priest was Father Flanagan.

## Saints and Miracles

By Sharon Nelsen, Coordinator, Advisory Council

The following is from the November 3, 2006, *The Catholic Voice*, (the Omaha Archdiocesan newspaper). The original article is by Carol Glatz of *Catholic News Service*.

### “Saints are for us friends and role models of life”

Pope Benedict XVI, said on November 1, 2006, All Saints Day, that saints as friends and role models of life, together with Christ, point people toward God and his divine plan, showing them how to “experience the joy of someone who trusts in God because the one real cause of sadness and unhappiness for humanity is to live apart from him.”

To be holy does not mean having to perform superhuman feats or “possess exceptional charisms”; one simply must serve Jesus by listening to and following him “without losing heart when faced with difficulties,” the Pope said.

All the saints had their own “way of the cross” to surmount, and holiness always necessitates overcoming some kind of difficulty. But nothing “can block the path of the Christian who follows the footsteps of Christ,” the Pope said.

### “Miracles occur every day at Boys Town”

—Stan Struble, Class of 1968

Father Flanagan’s genius and spirituality are as viable and relevant today as they were in 1917. The miracle of Boys Town is that our Founder created a place that provided exactly what children require in order to become good citizens. You see, no matter how hard the staff works, no matter how well they counsel or role model, it’s still up to the individual child to make the transformation.

There’s no magic pill or bullet. Only the child can make the decision to heal from their abuse and neglect. No one can do the hard work for them. Herein lies the miracle and genius of Father Flanagan. All Boys Town Alumni know that



Father Flanagan with his boys at Overlook Farm

Father Flanagan built this place just for them. We all experienced his spiritual presence and healing in some way, whether in church, school or on the gridiron. His spirituality and mission continues to resonate individually within each new generation.

For many hundreds of years ‘miracles’ have been viewed solely within the context of inexplicable medical cures. As our knowledge of science has grown, we now know that many ‘miracles’ are now quite easily explained; not all, obviously, but many. And some miracles can best be explained as unnatural events that occur naturally. Whether through ignorance or fear, the mind, that entity most important in governing our being, has never been viewed as a bodily organ in need of healing except within a biological context. In retrospect, sitting here in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, one can only speculate on why such a narrow definition of ‘miracle’ has been used to demonstrate holiness.

Miracles occur every day at Boys Town—some small, others huge—but ‘miracles’ nonetheless. Unless you’ve been the victim of spiritual neglect, or chronic physical and emotional abuse as a child, you can’t truly appreciate the difficulties and barriers in becoming emotionally healed. It’s a process that requires a very special place, committed staff, and a spiritual font to nourish and heal the mind. Through Father Flanagan, all three have become an integral part of Boys Town. It’s the type of miracle that goes unrecognized and unappreciated except by those of us who know what the alternative would have been; frightening to realize how badly our lives might have turned out, and awe-inspiring to know that only a miracle could have saved us... Father Flanagan’s life was divinely inspired; he was selected by God for a very special mission: to bring help, healing and hope to children and families; **‘miracles’ of the heart and soul are as rare and real and relevant as ‘medical miracles’.**

# Join the Father Flanagan League

## Order Free Materials

- ◇ Informational Brochure
- ◇ Prayer cards
- ◇ Prayer leaflets and guide lines for forming a prayer group for the cause
- ◇ Prayer for Parents Bookmark
- ◇ Pilgrimage brochure
- ◇ Posters
- ◇ Poster/prayer in Spanish
- ◇ Quarterly Newsletter
- ◇ Story of Father Flanagan
- ◇ Teaching unit, Grades 4-12

## Prayer Group

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

## Request a Presentation

- ◇ Monday—Friday
- ◇ Daytime or evening
- ◇ Omaha Archdiocese area

## Schedule a Pilgrimage

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

## Contact us:

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

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*Editor & Layout: Sharon Nelsen*

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*It is the distinctive mark of Christmas that the degree of happiness and joy that we feel is determined largely by the amount of joy and happiness we bring to the hearts of others.* Fr. Flanagan

## Father Flanagan League 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 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.**