

HEART OF A SERVANT

THE FATHER FLANAGAN STORY



Who Was Father Flanagan?

- Father Edward Flanagan was a Catholic priest who changed the world through kindness and service
- Think about a time when someone helped you or when you helped someone else. Turn to a partner and share your story in 1-2 minutes.
- As we go through these slides, think about what made Father Flanagan special and how we can be helpers in our own communities.



Growing Up: Father Flanagan's Early Life



- Edward J. Flanagan was born in Ireland in 1886
- He became a Catholic priest because he wanted to serve God and help people
- He noticed many children on the streets of Omaha, Nebraska had no homes and no one to care for them
- Fr. Flanagan believed every child deserved love, education, and a safe place to live

The Problem: Homeless & Troubled Children

- In the early 1900s, thousands of children lived on the streets without families or homes
- These children were hungry, cold, and often got into trouble because they had no one to guide them
- Many people ignored these children or treated them badly
- Father Flanagan knew he had to do something to change this situation.



Boys Town: A New Home



- In 1917, Father Flanagan started Boys Town in Omaha, Nebraska—a place where homeless boys could live safely
- He welcomed boys of all backgrounds and religions, showing that everyone deserved care and respect
- Boys Town provided food, clothing, education, and most importantly, love and belonging
- The boys learned trades and skills to help them become successful adults.

How Boys Town Changed Lives

- Boys at Boys Town learned farming, carpentry, cooking, and other useful skills
- They attended school and received real education, not just punishment
- They lived in family-style homes with houseparents who cared for them like real families
- Many boys who arrived broken and hopeless left as confident young men ready for good lives



“There Are No Bad Boys..”

- Father Flanagan’s most famous saying was: “There are no bad boys. There are only bad environments and bad examples.”
- He believed that every child could become good if given love, education, and opportunity
- Instead of punishing boys, he taught them, encouraged them, and showed them they were valued
- This idea was revolutionary—most people thought differently about troubled children back then

Think–Pair–Share: What Would You Do?

- Think (1 minute): If you saw a homeless child on the street, what would you want to do to help?
- Pair (2 minutes): Turn to a partner and share your ideas. Listen to their ideas too.
- Share (2 minutes): We'll hear from a few pairs about their thoughts.
- Father Flanagan's answer was to create a whole community dedicated to helping!



Father Flanagan's Legacy & Impact

- Father Flanagan's work inspired people around the world to help children in need
- Boys Town still exists today and helps thousands of children every year
- His message—that every child matters and deserves a chance—changed how people think about helping others
- His life shows us that one person's compassion and hard work can transform many lives



Compass Points: Where Do You Stand?

- Move to a corner based on what you think is most important about Father Flanagan's story:
 - North: His belief that "there are no bad boys"
 - South: Creating Boys Town as a safe home
 - East: Teaching boys skills and education
 - West: Showing love and respect to all children
- In your corner, discuss with others why you chose that spot (2 minutes).



Exit Ticket: Reflection on Learning

- On a piece of paper, answer one of these questions:
 - (1) What did you admire most about Father Flanagan?
 - (2) How can you demonstrate having a "heart of a servant" like Father Flanagan in your own life?
 - (3) What surprised you most about his story?



Closing Circle: Celebrate What We Learned!

- Let's go around and share one word describing how Father Flanagan's story made you feel
- Appreciations: Thank you to everyone for thoughtful listening and sharing today
- Challenge for you: This week, do one act of service for someone who needs help
- Remember: You have the power to change someone's life, just like Father Flanagan did