

MAY
2026

FATHER FLANAGAN LEAGUE SOCIETY OF DEVOTION



WELCOME TO OUR SPECIAL EDITION NEWSLETTER

VENERABLE



In this special edition:

Title of Venerable, President's Update, Article from Deacon
Omar F.A. Gutiérrez, Update from Ireland and more!

Beatification and Intercession Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,
Thank you for the graces given to Venerable Father Edward J. Flanagan, who dedicated his life to bring your Fatherly love to all children, especially to those You placed in his care. May we emulate the heroic virtue of Venerable Father Flanagan, who trusted in Your Divine Providence and gain in his intercession with the needs placed before You: (name your petition)

We ask You, Lord God, to raise Venerable Father Flanagan to sainthood in Your Holy Church, that You may be glorified in the work he began and in the work that continues throughout the world in all those who lovingly care for Your precious little ones. We pray in the Name of Your Son Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Savior.

Amen

Canonization Process

✓ *PRE-DIOCESAN PHASE*

✓ *DIOCESAN PHASE*

ROMAN PHASE

BEATIFICATION

CANONIZATION

Stages Toward Sainthood

✓ *SERVANT OF GOD*

VENERABLE

BLESSED

SAINT

UPDATE FROM FFLSD PRESIDENT ED MORSE

The Vatican's recent declaration of Father Flanagan as "venerable" is an important milestone in his cause for sainthood. Although we still await the document from the Holy Father that officially declares his venerable status, the recommendation from the Dicastery of the Causes of the Saints culminates a rigorous and thorough examination of evidence about Father Flanagan's life and works. That evidence has demonstrated his heroic virtue and likely presence in heaven. Accordingly, the church now encourages and approves private prayers seeking the Venerable Father Flanagan's intercession.

All Christians share the important work of intercessory prayer. The Body of Christ is united across time, including those faithful ones who have preceded us in death. The "communion of saints" is a powerful reality that unites us all. Just as we routinely seek the prayers of friends and neighbors, the church has assured us that we may also privately seek the aid of Father Flanagan to intercede for us and for those we love. Let us all proceed with greater confidence based on this assurance.

The cooperation of many people has helped us reach this milestone. Archbishop Emeritus Lucas, as well as Archbishop McGovern, and Bishop Doran of the Diocese of Elphin have shown tremendous leadership and support for the cause, along with a litany of fellow pilgrims who have contributed their time, talent, and treasure in faithful devotion. Thank you all for such wonderful support!

But our journey is far from finished. We want to touch the lives of others with the gospel and the encouragement that accompanies the holy example of Father Flanagan. Many people need a miraculous touch from God in their lives. Your prayers might make the difference! As you receive graces from those prayers through the intercession of Father Flanagan, please share them with us at <https://fatherflanigan.org/prayer-devotions/>.

With Gratitude,

Ed Morse

President, Father Flanagan League Society of Devotion



Hearing the good news of Venerable Edward J. Flanagan brings much joy!

WRITTEN BY
KEVIN L. WARNEKE

The more I learn about Father Flanagan, the more he – and his life of heroic virtue – fascinate me. The word that keeps coming to mind when I think about the life he led and the legacy he left is “courage.”

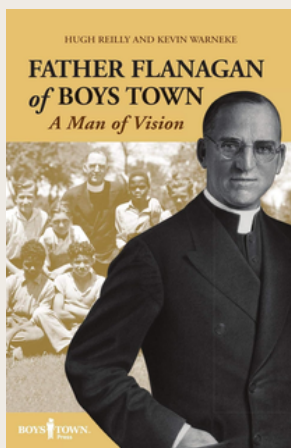
I first was introduced to Father Flanagan when I worked at Boys Town in the 1980s. He had been gone from Boys Town for four decades, but his presence remained. As I wrote training manuals and guidebooks for use in Boys Town’s youth care program, I kept thinking: All this good was set in motion because a Catholic priest decades earlier had the courage to start a home for wayward boys during a time when these youngsters were discarded.

My reintroduction to Father came decades later when I had the honor to co-write one of the biographies that has been written about him. I spent months researching the man – reading his correspondence and reviewing newspaper articles written about him and Boys Town from the early days.

The more I read, the more I realized that he was generations ahead of his time: Father Flanagan didn’t proselytize. He allowed those who came to Boys Town to choose their own religious path. The important part, according to Father Flanagan, was that they learn to pray. So, he taught them.

I also learned – and, as someone whose profession is fundraising, this hit home– Father Flanagan wasn’t afraid to ask for support. He knew his cause was sound and he unapologetically asked anyone he encountered to join him. His quest led to a lasting friendship with one of America’s notable athletes of the time: Babe Ruth. That’s a story for another day.

Finally, I learned that Father Flanagan didn’t see color, creed or gender. He welcomed all. Keep in mind this was a time when sexism and racism remained entrenched in American society. This took courage.



**YOU CAN ORDER OR DOWNLOAD
FATHER FLANAGAN OF BOYS
TOWN: A MAN OF VISION
ON AMAZON OR KINDLE**

WHO WAS VENERABLE FATHER FLANAGAN, BOYS TOWN FOUNDER?

WRITTEN BY DEACON OMAR F.A. GUTIERREZ, ARCHDIOCESE OF OMAHA FOR OSV NEWS – MARCH 23, 2026



In the early 1940s, a young boy sought out Father Edward Flanagan as he toured the East Coast with an entourage of boys from the “town of little men” he had founded in Omaha, Nebraska. The boy, who had suffered a great deal in his brief life, had arranged to ask if he could come to live in Boys Town.

After the initial meeting, he was allowed to join Father Flanagan and his boys at a fancy state dinner given in their honor. The lad had never eaten at such a table, however. There were more plates, bowls, glasses and utensils than he knew what to do with. When the salad was served, he sat there perplexed and self-conscious, not daring to move lest his ignorance show and he be made fun of.

Across the long table, though, the boy’s concern caught the attention of Father Flanagan, who met the boy’s eyes with his own. Father Flanagan slowly and deliberately picked up the salad fork and indicated without a word that the boy should do the same. The bright child felt a wave of relief come over him, and he followed the priest’s lead.

Many years later, when that boy related this story, he said he felt seen and cared for in a way he hadn’t been in a long time, for Father Flanagan saw his pain and loved him from the other end of what seemed like another world altogether.

Heroic Work for the Poor

“Heart of a Servant: The Father Flanagan Story,” a documentary film released in the fall of 2024, tells, in many ways for the first time, the fuller story of the life of this remarkable Irish American priest whose cause for canonization is underway.

The film provides not just the outline of Father Flanagan’s life and the incredible impact he had, then and now, throughout the world; more importantly, it explains the spiritual foundation of his heroic work for the poor, a work he pursued throughout his life. Edward Joseph Flanagan was born July 13, 1886. The midwife did not give the child much of a chance. In the family’s stone hovel outside a small town in County Roscommon, Ireland, the sickly newborn’s grandfather grabbed him, tucked him between his chest and his coat, and rocked him before the fire that night. The baby boy would survive that first trial. He would survive a convulsion a few weeks later that turned him purple. He would survive many more battles with his health and other challenges in the coming years as he pursued the Christian life, shaped by his parents and by their lived Catholic culture.

He came to the United States in 1904 at the age of 18 – not to find fortune but, at the suggestion of his family, which had already started to move here, to study for the priesthood in America rather than in Ireland.

In 1906 he began his studies at St. Joseph’s Seminary in Dunwoodie in Yonkers, New York, for the Archdiocese of New York, and he fell ill soon after. Edward’s health was never excellent, but the acuteness of this illness was due to the young seminarian’s insistence on caring for the forgotten who languished alone in the tuberculosis wards of Hell’s Kitchen. Other seminarians were involved as well, but Edward felt a distinct calling to be close to them, to serve those who couldn’t interact with the outside world and those who wished to communicate with loved ones.

He visited as often as he could, telling the bedridden the news and volunteering to write letters to family back in Ireland or other places. But the difficult New York winter, along with his regular exposure to the sick and his constant studies, left him drained. Weakened by coughing attacks, he was forced to try to finish his courses while bedridden.

The sickly young man was eventually released from his studies and then from the Archdiocese of New York in order to join his older brother, Father Patrick Aloysius Flanagan, who was a priest of the then-Diocese of Omaha, Nebraska. After several other fits and starts at study, Edward was finally ordained a priest in 1912.

Nebraska ministry

Father Flanagan's servant heart was called upon right away. The Easter Day tornado that devastated Omaha in 1913, the various droughts that made farmhands into what he called "floating families" as they searched for work, and the transient workmen who traveled through Omaha over the next couple years put the young priest in contact with many suffering people.

By 1915, Father Flanagan was assigned to the Workingman's Hotel, a place he had helped erect with the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Omaha for the temporary housing of transient men coming in and out of the city in search of seasonal labor. He was not content just to house these men or run a flophouse. Rather, he endeavored to provide them with the skills, connections and hope to be able to end their transient lifestyles. However, listening to their sad stories, he came to realize that their wounds began at a very young age.

One evening in 1917, a boy in ragged clothes begged to be allowed to stay at the hotel for a night. "Just give me a corner," the boy with flushed cheeks said. "I'll be satisfied." It was cold outside, so Father found a bed for him, isolated from the men, and fed him. That night, he knelt down and prayed, thinking of his own upbringing in Ireland and of his loving parents. God, he said, "opened (his) eyes" to the great need of other young boys and to what would be his great calling.

Shortly after this, Father Flanagan went to the juvenile courthouse and found several young boys, ages 12 to 15, before a judge. He convinced the judge to release the boys into his own care, and so started what would eventually become Boys Town. Father would continue this work through much personal and public tribulation until his death in 1948 while on mission to spread his "gospel of love" to postwar Germany. The cause for his canonization was opened in the Archdiocese of Omaha in 2012.

Seeing others' inherent goodness

In Father Flanagan's time, American society was much taken with the theory of eugenics, which insisted that what made people behave badly, what made them poor,

what kept the "lower classes" low, was a genetic makeup that made them "unfit." There was, then, nothing to do for street boys or non-whites but commend them to their fate. And though there were orphanages for the very young and homes for adolescent girls, the fate of adolescent boys from impoverished and dysfunctional backgrounds was almost inevitably homelessness, crime and a penal system that put 14-year-old boys in Leavenworth Prison and sent some of them only slightly older to the electric chair.

In the midst of this culture, Father Flanagan proved to be a man of both wisdom and the Holy Spirit. He spoke out against the many injustices of racial segregation. He decried the use of the death penalty. He openly criticized the government for interning Japanese Americans during World War II.

But he was never satisfied with merely speaking out. His prophetic witness was to demonstrate through Boys Town the power of an essentially Christian culture, one built on the principle that every child is at heart good, made by his creator with a capacity for goodness that would not be beaten into him by adults with batons. Rather, each boy's inherent goodness would be modeled for him by his peers, boys just like them.

Father Peter Dunn, a young priest of the Archdiocese of Omaha who was assigned in 1944 to work with Father Flanagan at Boys Town, was amazed by his care for so many — but more than that, he was amazed at his prayer life. No matter how early Father Dunn got up in the morning, he could never beat Father Flanagan to the chapel. Father Dunn found him there every day, on his knees, praying before sunrise.

Father Flanagan's Mass was also early in the morning, and he had a rotation of Catholic boys serve the Mass for him. After Mass, each of the servers would receive a blessing from Father Flanagan before he was released for his day's chores and studies. One day, one server had chosen not to receive Communion. So, when it came time for his blessing, Father Flanagan blessed him, put his hand on the lad's shoulder, and said, "Dear, don't you know that you have everything you need here to become a saint?" Here, Father Flanagan revealed his true mission.

'Prayers work miracles'

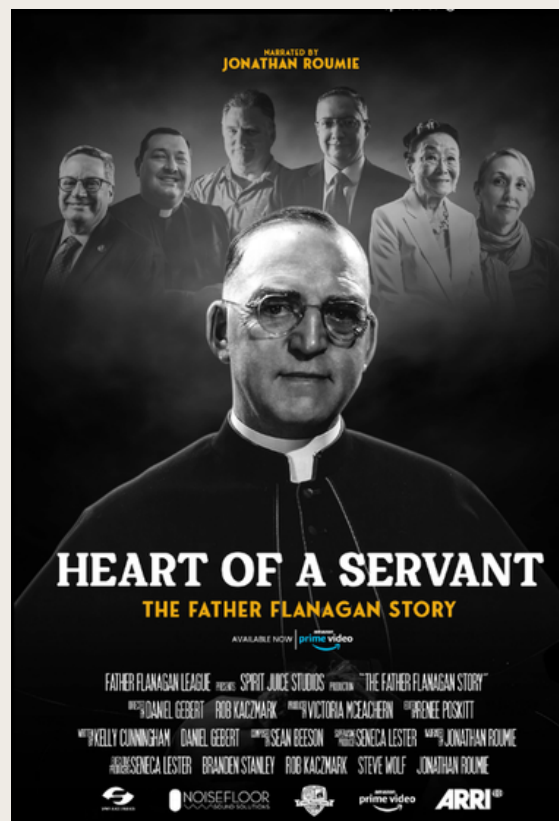
Boys Town was never primarily an effort to overthrow systems, though that is exactly what ended up happening to childcare systems both in the United States and abroad. No, the work at Boys Town was an outgrowth of Father Flanagan's deep love of Jesus, of his prayer life, of his identity as a man ordered to Christ and ordered more specifically to the servant ministries of Jesus, which include the proclamation of the Good News to the poor and the defense and care of the vulnerable. Through it all, Father Flanagan's deepest hope was that his boys would strive for sanctity, the true standard of all human fulfillment. So, whether it was a patient in a tuberculosis ward, a boy suffering from awkwardness at a table of abundance, or that boy who came to him looking for a corner out of the cold, Father Flanagan's heart was always moved to love, to comfort, to inspire the other to hope because his heart was ordered to Jesus.

When Father Flanagan died, and the paeans began to pour in, they came from religious and civic leaders across the country. The editor of the Protestant Christian Herald newspaper, Daniel Poling, wrote that Father Flanagan "loved and served beyond the barricades of faith and race. ... He loved freedom with a passion, and he wanted every group, every minority, every person to be free — free to conquer an evil inheritance, free to develop a worthy character, free to be a man in God's image." This was possible because Flanagan took his faith seriously, the faith that teaches we are all made in the image and likeness of God and that we are made to worship him and can never be fully ourselves until we do. "Pray," Father Flanagan taught his boys, "for prayers work miracles."

In who he was and what he did, Father Flanagan is an icon of the power of diaconal identity. It both shows us and makes effective now the power of Christ the Servant. Where Father Flanagan saw pain, he rushed in and embraced the child of God who suffered. When he saw injustice, he spoke out eloquently and forcefully called others to greater charity in Christ. But before any of that, he prayed. He identified himself with Christ Jesus and his love. Father Flanagan was, in the end, a priest who took his diaconal ordination so seriously that he allowed the Lord to use him in that role of service to the world. And the world is better for it.

A special thanks to OSV News for allowing us to share this story!

Deacon Omar F.A. Gutierrez is a deacon of the Archdiocese of Omaha and was the notary for the tribunal that investigated the archdiocesan phase of Father Edward Flanagan's cause for canonization.



Closed Captioning in Spanish



Update from Ireland: Father Flanagan Visitor Centre

**BY ALAN CROGHAN
BALLYMOE, IRELAND**

For the community of Ballymoe, our Parish, and for Ireland, the recognition of Fr Flanagan as Venerable is a source of great local and national pride, and a reminder of the profound impact one individual can have through compassion and conviction. Father Flanagan's life serves as a powerful example of how faith in action can transform lives and challenge societal norms.

As the cause for his canonization progresses, people in Ireland and around the world are encouraged to learn more about his life and to seek his intercession.

The Father Flanagan Visitor Centre and Memorial Garden in Ballymoe stand as a living tribute to his legacy. As a mission of our Parish and Diocese, they offer a welcoming space for education, reflection, and inspiration, helping visitors to connect more deeply with his story and values.

Our Visitor Centre season is from May 1st to September 30th but visitors can be facilitated at any time throughout the year. We are delighted to see visitor numbers steadily increasing, as more people come to learn about Father Flanagan. We regularly welcome pilgrimage groups journeying to Knock Shrine, along with individuals and other groups. The response from visitors is consistently positive, with many touched by the spirit and story of Ballymoe, and Father Flanagan's early life. We have recently launched our new website, developed with the valued support of the Father Flanagan League. This important step allows us to reach a wider national and international audience, and to invite more people to experience our welcoming village — the place where Father Flanagan's journey began.



**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE
VISIT**

WWW.FATHERFLANAGANVISITORCENTRE.IE

PHONE: 00353 87 7665219

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It is time for our FFLSD Annual Spring Campaign **Our goal is \$50,000 in 30 Days**

Donate after April 19th and before midnight May 6th to have your donation matched!

Proceeds will support our work in sharing the heroic virtue of

Fr. Flanagan and the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Father Flanagan League Society of Devotion is an all-volunteer organization. Your donation will go to the direct costs for the production and distribution of devotional information, and other costs associated with proper administration of the organization.

Donate by mailing a check to:

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Boys Town, NE 68010

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