**Father Flanagan**

FATHER (to music): How strange it seemed to me, that a few hours earlier, I’d been celebrating my first Easter Mass as a newly ordained priest, and now, found myself at the foot of the cross. There were so many killed or injured, and now homeless… created in a matter of minutes by this horrible storm. As the days and weeks followed, many of these homeless souls never recovered from the devastation! They would roam the streets of Omaha, settling than lifting again, like fallen leaves in the dead of winter. They joined the ranks of other drifters who lived on the streets of Omaha. And so, with the help of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, we opened the Workingmen’s Hotel and offered these men shelter, food, and a chance at a better life…if they would take it.

Sadly, most had given up on anything better than to wander…wander until they found the grave; dead before they had reached old age. Those who remained were shells of men; empty, with no purpose for living.

FATHER: Well boys, it looks like we’ll be spending some time together then…

IRISH: Ain’t no grown up ever stood up for me before. Thanks Father!

SKID: Me neither… what’s your angle?

FATHER: Angle? Oh…the state of my soul, I suppose. I’d be neglectful on my part if I hadn’t spoken up for you, and I don’t think the Good Lord above would let me off the hook for it.

WILL: Ole Skid don’t believe in God, Father. Just ask him.

SKID: Close yer mouth, *Pin-Will*…he don’t need to know that.

FATHER: That’s all right son…you don’t need to hide the way you feel about things with me. You have a free will, and you’re entitled to use it.

WILL: But yer a priest…ain’t you ‘spose to pitch God?

FATHER: I suppose you could look at it that way, but I think God does a pretty good job of “pitching” for himself. Just look around at his nature. Look at the sky, or that pretty little bird there, or the whole flock of them for that matter! Or even…look…at you…

WILL: Me!

FATHER: It doesn’t take much to convince me that somebody mighty clever had to create all of this. I don’t think it just happened by chance, do you?

WILL: But Father, I ain’t nothin’ special…ain’t none of us…we’re just street kids.

FATHER: And who is to decide that “street kids” are not worthy of the Lord’s eye? You know, this God of mine, once said that if he cared about the smallest of birds, the sparrow, and he took care of all its needs, could he not take care of each of us in the same way?

SKID: All due respect Father, that ain’t exactly been my experience.

FATHER: You don’t believe me?

HERBERTZ: Forgive me Father, but I’m not much of a believer.

FLANAGAN: Then why ask for my forgiveness?

HERBERTZ: It’s an expression…

FLANAGAN: Is it? When you say ‘forgive me Father’, you are asking me to accept you in spite of our differences, when I have already done so…*because* of our differences.

HERBERTZ: Because of our differences?

FATHER: Yes…When a person realizes there is something beyond their self, it makes them realize they have no right to take what is not theirs, and that includes the dignity of another person. You, my friend, are made in the image and likeness of God. Not you nor I, nor any other person on this earth can do that. I have no right to tear you down.

*Herbertz remains silent*

FATHER: You know… there was a day not long ago, when one of my boys came to me with a little beetle in his hand. We were marveling at its shiny black wings and tiny legs. At one point, the boy placed the beetle on the ground and raised his foot to squash it as boys often do…but I stopped him, and said, “Michael, I know you have the ability to kill that tiny creature, but do you think you can bring it back to life, or give it life in the first place?” And the little lad stopped for a moment and gently put his foot down. Then with tears in his eyes said, “No Father I can do neither...” And I said, “Is it not amazing how God has designed things?”

HERBERTZ: That’s a good story. You ought to write it down.