



Girls
and
Boys
Town

FAMILY SPOTLIGHT
THOUGHTS FROM GIRLS AND BOYS TOWN

The Original Father Flanagan's Boys' Home

Education Ignites the Fires of Freedom

By *Father Val J. Peter, JCD, STD* (NAPSA)—In the midst of these dark days after September 11, Americans are asking themselves how they can advance the cause of freedom.

Many things can be done, but one of the most important is educating our children. This is the first and best defense of freedom.

Since the terrorists struck, a remarkable thing is happening across this land. For the first time in decades, children are showing interest in events outside their own egocentric little worlds of teen culture. Our children are asking parents and teachers questions. They are willing to and want to learn.



Father Val Peter

So what do we teach?

Unfortunately, we have a generation of school children who know almost nothing of our country's heroes and their sacrifices to preserve our freedom. They know little of the history defining the actions of these heroic men and women.

There are two factors that play a part in this problem. The way history is taught to our children and Internet plagiarism.

Often, parents and educators teach the negative side of our history. The average American History text is too often the litany of the foibles, errors and mistakes of our beloved country—things like stealing land from Native Americans, slavery and treating women unfairly.

While it is important to learn from these mistakes, many times it excludes teaching anything good our nation has accomplished. Most parents and teachers prefer to teach in a more positive manner. However, they did not write the textbooks.

The other factor is Internet plagiarism. More than 70 percent of American teens say the Internet is their primary source of information. Nearly half of all high school students report they copy Internet reports word for word, handing them in as their own.

This is the time for parents to teach children knowledge is not imparted by plagiarism. They need to know uneducated children grow up to be uneducated adults.

Recently, a lady said to me, "How awful it was to see those Jewish children in Israel cheering while watching the replays of the World Trade Center tragedy." When I told her those were not Jewish children, she looked dumbfounded.

Terrorists and dictators love uneducated people. They are easier to control. As Hitler rose to power, his followers made a huge bonfire in Berlin, burning the classics of Western civilization while chanting, "We spit on your freedom."

Our children's passion can be fueled by education, not ignorance. We can ignite these flames of freedom by sharing stories of our heroes and the sacrifice of their acts. These are the same stories that inspire people from every nation to immigrate to the United States.

It is important for each of us Americans to take the torch of liberty and give in the service of our country so "freedom's holy light" may burn brightly and spread across the face of the earth.

Father Val Peter is executive director of Girls and Boys Town, the original Father Flanagan's Boys' Home, in the Village of Boys Town, Neb. and in California, New York, Louisiana, Texas, Florida, Nevada, Rhode Island, Iowa, Philadelphia, Georgia and Washington, D.C.