



## The Venerable Father Michael J. McGivney Honoris

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## **By Example.**

Fr. McGivney did not invent the principles of the Order – charity, unity, and fraternity – rather, he drew them from the heart of the Gospel he knew so well.

Fr. McGivney did not merely have a knack for synthesizing the Gospel, that is, for reducing it to three or four principles.

He lived the Order's principles before he taught them to the founding members of the Knights of Columbus. These men would not have committed to the principle of charity had they not seen in Fr. McGivney a man of tireless pastoral charity, who reflected God's love through acts of personal generosity and compassion. They would not have committed to the principle of unity had they not seen how Fr. McGivney unified St. Mary's Parish and how he served as a source of unity in the wider community of New Haven. Nor would they have committed to the principle of fraternity had they not seen how Fr. McGivney was not only the father but also the brother to his parishioners and indeed to anyone in need. What St. John Chrysostom said in the fifth century was true of Fr. McGivney in the 19th: "Martyrs, he said, "die only once for Jesus Christ while the pastor must die daily for his flock."

Fr. McGivney lived a mere 38 years and served as a priest for only 13. Yet what good and lasting fruit his priestly ministry has borne – the good and lasting fruit of discipleship so evident in the Knights of Columbus, nearly two million strong, united in a brotherhood of charity that evangelizes.

At the end of his life, in 1890, Fr. McGivney was deeply influencing the 5,000 Knights who belonged to some 51 councils in Connecticut and Rhode Island. Today, his influence has grown exponentially. Not only does his example shape an Order of men and their families, his prayers inspire us and drive the mission of the Order forward.

To all of us, in some ways Fr. McGivney is our parish priest, the parish priest of our soul. We pray to him and pray that he be canonized, as many do. How earnestly we should pray for him to be raised to the dignity of the altars. With what confidence

should we make our own the sentiments of Knights of Columbus Board of Directors at the time of Father McGivney's death, "For the seeds of Charity, Unity, and Brotherly Love by him sown among us let our thanksgiving rise; in our prosperity let us ask God to reward him with eternal happiness for his labors and his devotion to our cause...".

Venerable Father McGivney, Intercede for us.

Vivat Jesus!

Visit the Honoris website: <http://www.michaeljmcgivneyhonoris.ca>

Father McGivney, Pray for us..

Father Michael J. McGivney Honoris, Ottawa

### **American Priest Beatified: Father McGivney**

Think about it, Father McGivney is declared "Blessed", the step just before sainthood. An additional miracle attributed to Father McGivney's intercession will be required for his canonization as a saint.

Father McGivney was a Connecticut priest who served his flock during the pandemic of 1890, before himself becoming ill and dying of pneumonia. He is best known for founding the Knights of Columbus in 1882. Nearly a century before the Second Vatican Council, his prescient vision empowered the laity to serve Church and neighbour in a new way.

Father McGivney was born of Irish immigrant parents on 12 August 1852 in Waterbury, Connecticut. His father, Patrick, was a native of Drumkilly (Crosserlough Parish) and his mother, Mary Lynch, came from Castlerahan – both in the Diocese of Kilmore, Ireland.

His parents came to the United States in the great 19th-century wave of Irish immigration and were married in Waterbury. Patrick was a molder in the heat and noxious fumes of a brass mill. Mary gave birth to 13 children, six of whom died young, leaving Michael (the eldest) with four living sisters and two brothers, who also became priests.

Father McGivney was a central figure in the dramatic growth of the Church in the United States in the late 19th century. Ordained in Baltimore in 1877, he ministered to a heavily Irish-American and immigrant community in the then Diocese of

Hartford. At a time of anti-Catholic sentiment, he worked tirelessly to keep his flock close to the faith in part by finding practical solutions to their many problems, spiritual and temporal alike. With a group of the leading Catholic men of New Haven, he founded the Knights of Columbus in 1882 at St. Mary's Church to provide spiritual support for Catholic men and financial resources for families that had suffered the loss of their breadwinner. The fledgling group soon became a major force in the areas of evangelization, charity, racial integration, and the defence of religious freedom.

Never robust in health, Father McGivney continued to minister until he fell ill during the pandemic of 1889-1890, possibly caused by a corona virus and was stricken with severe pneumonia in January 1890. The young priest lost physical strength just as the Knights of Columbus were moving toward new vitality. He died on August 14, just two days past his 38th birthday.

Today, Father McGivney's body is interred in a beautiful marble tomb in St. Mary's Church in New Haven, where he founded the Knights of Columbus.

His vision and mission continue to bear fruit through the work he inspired in the more than 2 million Knights of Columbus working throughout the world. These men, these Knights, form a band of brothers dedicated to faith in action under the principles of charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism.

In March 2008, he was declared a Venerable Servant of God by Pope Benedict XVI, who cited the "remarkable accomplishment of that exemplary American priest, the Venerable Michael McGivney, whose vision and zeal led to the establishment of the Knights of Columbus."

The beatification Mass will be held in Hartford Connecticut on October 31, 2020. It will include the reading of an apostolic letter from the Holy Father and the bestowing of the title "Blessed" on Father McGivney.

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Vivat Jesus!

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