

A MAN OF THE CHURCH

Ten years after it was opened, Father McGivney's cause for canonization continues to progress and popular devotion grows

BY ALTON J. PELOWSKI

Father Michael J. McGivney's work and legacy did not end with his death on Aug. 14, 1890, at the young age of 38. Despite the rapid growth of the Knights of Columbus after he founded the Order in 1882, Father McGivney surely never dreamed its membership, charitable works and insurance program would reach the magnitude they have today. The Order has continued to grow and carry on its founder's legacy, serving God and neighbor in innumerable ways. And while this is certainly something to celebrate, there is a deeper reason Father McGivney is honored today.

Detail of the statue of Father Michael J. McGivney at the Knights of Columbus headquarters in New Haven.



Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Pope Benedict XVI's envoy to the Knights' 125th Supreme Convention in Nashville last August, reminded attendees that Father McGivney understood charitable activities mean little if they are not rooted in faith; and more fundamentally than being a man of social concerns, Father McGivney was "a man of the Church." What inspired him to action was nothing less than his profound faith in Jesus Christ.

Indeed, Father McGivney's faith and holiness have also been the impetus for the cause for his canonization, which officially began 10 years ago this month.

'MAKING' A SAINT

For many years, devotion to Father McGivney grew gradually, along with an understanding about his life. In 1982, his body was re-interred from Waterbury, Conn., to a sarcophagus in St. Mary's Church in New Haven, where

Father McGivney founded the Knights 100 years earlier.

Dominican Father Gabriel B. O'Donnell was later appointed postulator of the cause for Father McGivney's canonization. In December 1997, the diocesan phase of the cause began when then-Archbishop Daniel A. Cronin of Hartford appointed officials, both priests and laity, to investigate Father McGivney's life and virtue.

Canonization, the process in which the Catholic Church formally declares a person a saint, requires many steps — including careful inquiry about a person's life and holiness, a verified miracle attributed to the candidate's intercession, and an evaluation by the Vatican Congregation for the Causes of Saints. Once a person is beatified, or named "Blessed," another miracle must be reported and approved before the pope officially declares someone a saint. The process varies greatly in length. The beatification of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta in October 2003, just six years after her death, was the fastest in modern times.

In the case of Father McGivney, an investigation into a miraculous cure, which was attributed to his intercession, was completed in 2000 and submitted to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. Another *positio*, a long exposition of Father McGivney's virtue, was also distributed among the Congregation in 2002. The next step is for the Congregation to complete its evaluation and make its recommendation to the Holy Father.

Knights of Columbus Family
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Week coincides annually with the anniversaries of Father McGivney's two "birthdays" — into this world (Aug. 12) and the next (Aug. 14). If he were to be beatified, Father McGivney's feast day would likely fall during this time as well, thus giving even more reason for celebration.

Cardinal Bertone spoke several times about Father McGivney at the 125th Supreme Convention. His words were an encouragement to those who await the decision of the Congregation. Archbishop Cronin was among those present.

"It was certainly a cause of tremendous happiness, joy and encouragement to hear Cardinal Bertone say he would take a personal interest in the cause," the archbishop said. "It seems all the indications are that the cause will reach a certain happy conclusion."

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Father McGivney's canonization may still be many years away, but that has not prevented Knights and others from honoring him as their patron and intercessor. There are at least 10 active K of C councils that have adopted Father McGivney's name. Chartered in July 1999, Father McGivney Council 12530 in North Platte, Neb., is one of the most recent.

Grand Knight Michael M. Krondak explained: "The founding council members chose Father McGivney because of his sacrificial love of neighbor in service to God and the Church. With him as patron,

A GROWING DEVOTION

Awareness of the life and heroic virtue of the Servant of God Father Michael J. McGivney has increased over the last 25 years



(Clockwise from left): Father McGivney's re-interment at St. Mary's; sending the appeal for canonization to the Vatican; a Web site devoted to the cause; a play on Father McGivney's life, *He Was Our Father*, written and staged in 2005-06, and a holy medal offered by the Father McGivney Guild.

we are reminded of his sacrificial love continually as we try to remain true to the Order's principles of Charity, Unity, Fraternity and Patriotism."

READ other tributes to Father McGivney at www.kofc.org.

Dr. Janet E. Smith holds the Father Michael J. McGivney Endowed Chair in Life Ethics at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit.

"There is a happy convergence of elements," Dr. Smith said of her position, which is made possible with financial support from K of C councils in Michigan. It brings together Father McGivney's reverence for the priesthood, the formation of young men, and the defense of families and the innocent.

"It's an honor to teach at the seminary," said Dr. Smith. "And I think it's a very exciting time to be forming priests. There's a renewed presence of masculine, youthful zeal."

Citing the prevalence of abortion, contraception, in vitro fertilization, cohabitation and pornography, Dr. Smith said of her students: "They know that it's a challenge. Yet they are very eager to find ways to reach people. It stems from a real love for the truth, for the Church and for the people in front of them."

Like in Michigan, the Oregon State Council is helping to form tomorrow's priests in Father McGivney's name. The Knights recently

WHY JOIN THE GUILD?

Opportunities for special Masses, prayer cards, a newsletter and more are offered to Father McGivney Guild members

The Father Michael J. McGivney Guild is open to anyone and currently includes more than 120,000 members.

Since January 1998, the Guild has published a bi-monthly newsletter, and in 2004, the Guild launched www.fathermcgivney.org, which features both information and the means to report favors or submit prayer intentions online.

There are spiritual bene-

fits to joining the Guild, too.

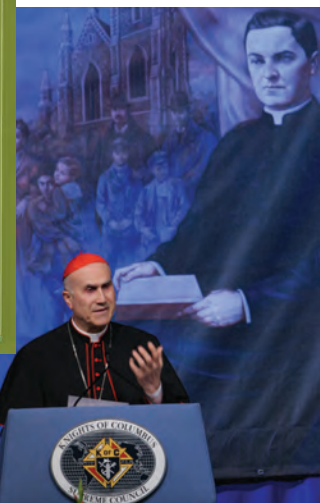
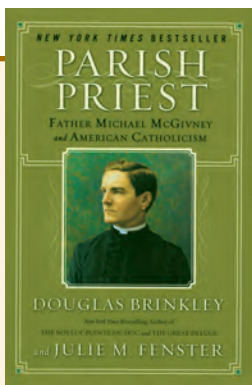
A monthly Mass is celebrated at St. Mary's Church for the intentions of Guild members. And from Oct. 24-Nov. 2, Father O'Donnell celebrates an All Souls novena of Masses for the deceased loved ones of Guild members.



Petitions from Guild members are even placed on altars in Rome, when a novena of Masses for world peace is celebrated prior to the feast of the Sacred Heart. Likewise, a triduum of Masses for Guild members is celebrated at St. Peter's Basilica during both the Easter and Christmas seasons.

To support its work and promote devotion, the Guild sells various items, including medals, statues and lapel pins, each featuring an image of Father McGivney. (Turn to page 31 to order these items.)

Although Guild membership is free, Knights and others must elect to be enrolled. To find out more, visit www.fathermcgivney.org, or call 203-752-4087.



(Clockwise from above): Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone expresses his personal interest in the cause in August; college Knights offer prayers at Father McGivney's sarcophagus, and the best-selling biography published in 2006.

ously to the Church and to the family," said Dr. David L. Schindler, academic dean and provost of the John Paul II Institute. "It thus joins together symbolically two of the great missions of the Knights of Columbus that Father McGivney had the prophetic genius to call into being and foster."

Father David M. O'Connell, president of Catholic University, is also enthusiastic about the campus's latest addition. "We are delighted to be renaming one of our most centrally located buildings on our campus after Father Michael J. McGivney," he said. "The memory of Father McGivney and the role he played in establish-

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funded the building of a homiletics room, which is part of a new academic center at Mount Angel Seminary in St. Benedict.

"A priority for the seminary was to have a preaching classroom where men could train and practice developing homiletic skills," explained Father Richard Paperini, rector of Mount Angel. "We decided to dedicate this classroom to the memory of Father Michael McGivney. In the room is a plaque, which attests to this, as well as a painting of the young founder of the Knights of Columbus."

Father McGivney has also played a prominent role in the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family, a graduate school of theology that the Order has supported since the school was first established in Washington, D.C. Two significant milestones will be reached in 2008, when the John Paul II Institute celebrates its 20th anniversary and moves into its new permanent home, a prominent building on the campus of The Catholic University of America. The building, currently being completely renovated thanks to a gift from the Knights, will be renamed McGivney Hall.

"To name the building after Father McGivney is to highlight the significance of his work simultane-

MAKING FATHER MCGIVNEY KNOWN

The Father Michael J. McGivney Guild, which Father O'Donnell directs, was founded prior to the official opening of the cause for his canonization. Among its purposes is to

'His example was outstanding, and it will surely inspire great things' ARCHBISHOP HENRY MANSELL

provide materials and information about both Father McGivney's life and the progress of the cause, and also to collect reports of favors attributed to Father McGivney's intercession.

Although he has not yet been declared a saint, many already revere him as such, calling him an "Apostle to the Young and Protector of Christian Family Life." They have taken Father McGivney as a spiritual model and ally, recognizing him as a friend of God who is interceding for us today.

The Guild regularly receives reports from people who have turned to the Knights' founder in times of need. After a car accident in 1998, a

cism (HarperCollins) in 2006 has helped many to learn about this servant of God. Yet his beatification and canonization would allow countless others to be inspired by his life.

As more people learn about Father McGivney, many echo the words Cardinal Bertone spoke during his keynote address at the Supreme Convention: "I can only hope that his life will be made known to many more people throughout the world..." ■

Alton J. Pelowski is managing editor of *Columbia* and a 2006 graduate of the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family in Washington, D.C.