



In Tulsa, Okla., the family of Robert E. Leugers faced a threat to its health and well-being. Leugers, a member of Norman Council 8523, was a civil servant whose position required him to be on the road almost one-third of the year. As a result, his five young children weren't seeing much of him. For the sake of his family, he knew he had to find a job that kept him closer to home.

His wife, Cynthia Wright, prayed every day for that intention, asking the intercession of Father McGivney. Her prayers were answered. Leugers found an ideal job requiring only two weeks of yearly travel, and at a higher salary. The new job has also given the family the time it needed to become more active in its parish.

Father Michael J. McGivney

*Apostle, Protector,
Founder and Intercessor*

The Servant of God is heralded as an Apostle to the Young, Protector of Christian Family Life and Founder of the Knights of Columbus. As his cause advances, Knights of Columbus families and others seek his intercession, and a closer relationship with Jesus Christ.

by Joseph Pronechen

"It was truly a blessing in every way," says a grateful Wright, who believes "Father McGivney has had an impact on people who want their employment to strengthen their life as a Christian family, for fathers wanting to spend more time with their children."

Promoting Awareness of Father McGivney

Praying for favors large and small is a primary reason nearly 40,000 people have joined The Father McGivney Guild. Established in 1997 when the cause for sainthood of Father Michael J. McGivney was officially opened by the Archdiocese of Hartford, Conn., the Guild serves as a clearinghouse for information about the Servant of God, his life and works, and any favors attributed to his intercession.

Dominican Father Gabriel B. O'Donnell serves as postulator. "The Guild's goal is to spread the good word about Father McGivney's holiness of life, to encourage devotion to his memory and to seek his intercession before the throne of God," explains Father O'Donnell, who currently works in Rome, where he is writing the "position paper" for canonization that will be presented to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints (see "Status of the Cause," page 7).

While Father O'Donnell works on the cause from Rome, the work of promoting individual and family membership in the Guild among Knights and Catholics in general has been turned over to dozens of Knights, primarily past state deputies. Each jurisdiction has a state Guild chairman who volunteers his time to promote awareness of Father McGivney and membership in the Guild.

Last March, as Virginia Past State Deputy Duane "Skip" Rogers (1998-99) was giving a talk to promote Guild membership, he didn't realize that Father McGivney was waiting to intercede on his behalf.

A smoker for 40 years, Rogers, a member of Father Vincent S. Sikora Council 7992 in Burke, spontaneously announced to his audience: "I'm going to try to quit smoking, and I ask you to pray with me," asking for Father McGivney's intercession.

"Since that day," he happily reports, "I haven't smoked."

Delaware chairman Vincent L. DiLeonardo, a member of Coffee Run Council 6768 in Hockessin and of the Order's Board of Directors, encourages Knights to tell him of favors they have received from Father McGivney's intercession. "This helps increase awareness," he says.

These favors can affect a K of C council too,

such as the recently formed St. David Council 12842 in Newark, Del. Before the installation of officers last March 25, members were notified that it was impossible for their council banner to be ready and in their hands for the ceremony. Immediately, they turned to Father McGivney to find some way the banner could be done on time. Four days before the installation, an absolutely amazed representative from the banner company called to say the embroidery had been finished — "unexplainably" — and the completed banner would indeed grace the installation.

District Deputy Mike A. McClain in northeast Kansas believes Father McGivney helped him launch two new councils. "As I was driving on the way to meetings," McClain explains, "I would say the prayer [for canonization] and ask for Father McGivney's intercession to get the council started if he saw fit to do so." The answer? In 1999, even though Knights couldn't get a foothold in Wea, Kan., for a decade, Holy Rosary of Wea Council 12546 was formed.

Fostering Grassroots Devotion

Week after week reports of prayers answered stream into the office of The Father McGivney Guild at the Knights of Columbus Supreme Council office in New Haven, Conn. Excerpts from these letters appear frequently in the free bi-monthly newsletter for Guild members.

Millie Millea, Father O'Donnell's assistant, tells people to let Father O'Donnell and her know "if Father McGivney had some special part in the good that happened — even little things they wouldn't call a miracle, but good in their life that they attribute to Father McGivney."

To foster devotion to Father McGivney, the Guild also provides free to members a prayer card for his canonization, (imbedded with a tiny thread from his clothing — a second class relic), a booklet on his life and legacy, a flyer on his spirituality, and new literature as it is developed. (Editor's Note: Fragments of a servant of God's body are called "first class relics." Pieces of clothing worn by the servant of God are "second class relics." Things touched to the candidate's body are "third class." Because Father McGivney's body was completely sealed in his present tomb in the rear of St. Mary's Church in New Haven at the time of his re-interment there in 1982, no first class relics are available.)

The Guild also makes available to members items like second class relics in a reliquary, rosaries, and portraits of the 19th century



Join the Guild

If you have not joined The Father McGivney Guild, complete and return the coupon found on page 31.

parish priest described in Guild literature as an "Apostle to the Young, Protector of Family Life and Founder of the Knights of Columbus."

Millea finds interest in the devotional items growing. People will call in for 25 prayer cards at once, for example, because they want to pray in a small group for a particular person or some special intention. Many of the requests relate to sickness, she says, cancer being prominent.

One powerfully moving testimony comes from Father John Williams, pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Clinton, N.C., and a member of Father Thomas A. Williams Council 11848 there. One of his parishioners, Maureen Goldberg, was suffering a combination of cancers in extreme states. Doctors could do absolutely nothing medically for her and told the family to prepare for her imminent death.

It was then that Father Williams had a thought: "I'm going to a North American parish priest in whose footsteps I'm walking." At Robert and Maureen Goldberg's home, Father Williams solemnly invoked Father McGivney's intercession.

The results were quick in coming. Not only didn't Maureen die, as everyone predicted and expected, but she's "continuing to improve," says Father Williams. "I had no doubt on this day the saint for the intercession was Father McGivney."

"It's extraordinary," he added, "She is leading today a rather normal, devoted life." He describes her as able to get back to Mass and walk pain-free. "She practically galloped to the Communion rail at Easter," he marvels. All signs of active cancer do not appear.

Even when a particular intention hasn't been answered yet, remarkable effects can show and also affect others, as with Deacon Warren and Anne Winkler in Glenoaks, N.Y. Warren, a member of St. Anne's Council 2429, suffers with pulmonary fibrosis.

A year ago, as Anne talked with Supreme Chaplain Bishop Thomas V. Daily, he reached into his pocket, pulled out Father McGivney prayer cards and told her to pray for the priest's intercession every night.

The Winklers have done that faithfully. "We firmly believe there's going to be a miracle through Father McGivney," Anne says as she ticks off good things already happening. For

Tributes to Father McGivney

At Our Lady of Lourdes Mission Church in Staten Island, N.Y., a 6-foot-by-3-foot stained-glass portrait of Father Michael J. McGivney has been the talk of parishioners since it was unveiled and dedicated on March 25. Says James J. McCue of Manresa Council 2147, which spearheaded the project: "Now we're going to get together on the Guild and we're going to go out there to push the Guild."

"We did this because we're trying to make him a saint," says McCue. He adds that the prayers of both his brother Knights and he and his wife, have received favors through the intercession of Father McGivney.



Father John J. Sheehan, pastor of this mission church and its mother church, Our Lady Queen of Peace, and also chaplain of Assumption Council 1694 in Port Richmond, has praise for the window. "I'm proud of the fact that the Knights of Columbus was founded by a parish priest and the fact they were honoring a parish priest with this window," he says. "It might do something to stimulate interest in the priesthood and vocations in the priesthood."

In Lubbock, Texas, people are talking about a typically "Texas-sized" tribute to the man who may become the first U.S. born parish priest made a saint. On Feb. 10, 2001, the young parish began meeting in a new building consisting of offices, classrooms and hall converted to church on Sunday for all Masses and services. Big letters spell out "McGivney Hall." The building is phase one in the planned construction of a new church and other parish facilities. Holy Spirit is the first new Catholic parish among the area's 36 Protestant congregations.

"Father McGivney was an inspiration to me," says Father Eugene J. Driscoll of Holy Spirit Church, a Knight for 28 years. When the parish started in 1998, it first used the Knights of Columbus hall for services and "they just opened their doors to us," he explains.

"Father McGivney started the Knights in the church," Father Driscoll says, "and we started the church in the Knights!" Parishioners are well aware of the reason for the hall's name. At the dedication Mass for the new hall, Bishop Placido Rodriguez, CMF of Lubbock presented the parish with a plaque bearing Father McGivney's likeness. In his blessing and dedication, Bishop Rodriguez congratulated the Knights of Lubbock Council 3008, of which he is a member, for their collaboration in the start of the new parish. "It is a privilege," he told the Knights, "to be so close to the fountain and source of holiness, as the birth of a new parish."



one, all visitors to the Winkler house now say the prayer with them before dinner, like a family. For another, people have even returned to the Church as a result.

Moreover, "We definitely have been given peace to get us through what we have to do," says Anne, full of gratitude.

Directly and indirectly, this kind of grassroots devotion to Father McGivney can spread far and wide, especially as the Guild grows. Considering there are 1.6 million Knights plus their wives, the present Guild membership should increase dramatically. Everyone is eligible — family, friends and, for that matter, non-Knights too, since there aren't restrictions. Anyone can and should pray for Father McGivney's intercession and his canonization cause.

"If you feel in your heart this (canonization) is something that should happen, you should join the Guild," says John A. Harrison Jr., North Carolina Guild chairman and past state deputy (1997-99). Guild membership in his state has shown a recent 60 percent increase. He strongly recommends the prayer for Father McGivney's canonization be said at the start or end of council meetings or other K of C functions.

Praying for a Miracle

In Trafford, Pa., Patrick and Stephanie Malley are using a second class relic and praying the canonization prayer for Father McGivney's exclusive intercession for a miraculous cure for their 6-year-old daughter Bridget. Patrick isn't a Knight, but he and his wife are Guild members, signed up by his brother-in-law Mark Owens, a Knight in Washington state

Before they turned to Father McGivney, tests showed that little Bridget's moderate to severe hearing loss was deteriorating more. But every night since, the Malleys have touched the relic to both of Bridget's ears, and the little girl says, "Father McGivney, pray for me." Together, Patrick and Stephanie say the prayer for canonization, seeking Father McGivney's intercession for their daughter, then add others in need.

"Since then, Bridget's hearing has stayed constant with no further loss," he reports, "and we're grateful for that."

Grand Knight Steven M. Schmerber

of St. Thomas More Council 9997 in Austin, Texas, recently purchased both a reliquary and framed portrait of Father McGivney (*for more information, see ad on page 31*). He makes the relic available to the whole council to borrow for prayer. He "found it a personal source of strength," he explains, "and a great help." The portrait will be a constant reminder of Father McGivney as a role model of the Knights, he says. This attitude is rooted in the Schmerber home too, where wife Janet has said the canonization prayer for Father McGivney for years, asking his protection for their family of five children and praying for vocations.

People are ordering the new Father McGivney portraits for their homes too. In Oklahoma, Leugers and Wright display theirs with the Sacred Heart and family pictures, including their five youngsters. It constantly reminds them to pray for his intercession in helping others to find jobs.

"With his [Father McGivney's] devotion to Catholic family life," says Wright, "he would be powerful in helping people get a job." In fact, she happily reports specific answers for a family friend's husband, a Protestant, who wanted to work in youth ministry.

The bonus? When visitors ask

about the portrait, Robert Leugers gets the perfect opening to tell them about Father McGivney and the Knights.

Protecting Families for Generations

Guild members can keep in mind that they're devoted to, and receiving favors from, a simple parish priest who was concerned for widows and orphans. Cynthia Jamerson Just of Kechi, Kan., keeps uppermost in her mind the priest's wish to protect families from financial hardship.

In 1996 she was a stay-at-home mother with a 9-year-old and three teens. For some reason, she says, she told her husband Dan Jamerson, who seemed in good health, that the family could use more life insurance, and suggested he ask the Knights.

A month after he took out a \$50,000 policy, he died suddenly of a heart attack. She says the money was a lifesaver at the time. "I really didn't know Father McGivney," she recalls, but looking back, she feels he was watching over them. ♦

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Status of the Cause

Dominican Father Gabriel B. O'Donnell, postulator of Father McGivney's cause since it opened in 1997, says that in that short time, "there has been great progress."

Currently, Father O'Donnell is living in Rome, where he is writing the *positio*, or "position paper" that will be used to advance Father McGivney's cause with the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

"The *positio* is a printed volume containing the lengthy argument for the beatification and canonization of Father McGivney. It takes a strong stand in favor of canonization," Father O'Donnell says. "The finished volume will have a detailed historical record of Father McGivney's life, a lengthy exposition of his spirituality, and finally documents on how the cause

began and progressed." Father O'Donnell aims to finish the *positio* and submit it to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints by the end of 2001.

Father O'Donnell also reports that a possible miracle attributed to Father McGivney's intercession has been submitted to the Congregation and is under review.

If the Congregation concurs with the findings of the *positio*, they will forward it to the pope, who will publish a decree naming Father McGivney "Venerable." If the miracle is proven authentic, the pope may next beatify the candidate, naming him a "Blessed." Another miracle would be needed to have him declared a saint.

"This is indeed a time of prayer for the cause," says Father O'Donnell.