



Blessed Michael McGivney

In the Words of His Contemporaries

Ten years after the death of Father McGivney, in June 1900, hundreds of Knights of Columbus from Brooklyn, N.Y., and all parts of Connecticut staged a pilgrimage to his hometown of Waterbury, Conn. They celebrated his life and his enduring legacy through the Order he founded. Here are excerpts from the orations of two priests who knew him well.

Father Slocum, pastor of Immaculate Conception Church, Waterbury:

“Father McGivney, though a man of unassuming character, was possessed of an indomitable will, by which, aided by the grace of God, he was able to face unkind and unjust criticism from all directions in his great effort to found a society for the benefit of young men and the glory of the church.”

“His idea was to found an organization that would direct young men to work in harmony on lines laid out that would conform to the teaching and the practice of the Church.”

“So long as the society follows in the pathway marked out by Father McGivney it is bound to prove a power and blessing in the world.”

Father O'Donnell, Historian, Diocese of Hartford:

Father McGivney lived “a life unselfishly given to the service of others, a life spent in the promotion of his neighbors’ welfare, a life redolent of deeds whose motive was the social, moral, intellectual and religious improvement of his fellows. ... Coincident with his spiritual labors, he wrought also for the temporal welfare of his brethren ...”

“Genial, approachable, of kindly disposition, cheerful under reverses, profoundly sympathetic with those upon whom had fallen the heavy hand of affliction, a man of strict probity and sterling integrity in his business transactions. He was charitable to a fault, if I may so speak. The poor found in him a Good Samaritan, and were frequent recipients of his bounty.”

“I have a vivid remembrance of the days that preceded the foundation of the order. I have personal recollections of the anxiety that preyed upon Father McGivney as he resolutely sought the realization of his heart’s desire. I know something of the obstacles he encountered and surmounted before the Knights became a reality. I witnessed the revision of this article and of that section of the organized law of the order, until he was satisfied that it met all needed requirements.”

“Before the altar all are equal. The beggar if such there be, kneels by the side of the possessor of wealth, and the man of dark skin occupies the same pew with his white brother. And this spirit pervades the Knights of Columbus; and so should it ever be.”

Father McGivney’s “life was an open book, whose pages all might read, and the influences that radiated from his active, energetic and zealous personality, brought many a poor wanderer to the house of God, back to the faith of his childhood, and to the sacred tribunal of penance, where with faith, contrition and humility, he became reconciled to his Heavenly Father. Father McGivney was nothing, if not active. His energy was restless, ever seeking new outlets, and to this disposition are we indebted for the existence of the Knights of Columbus.”