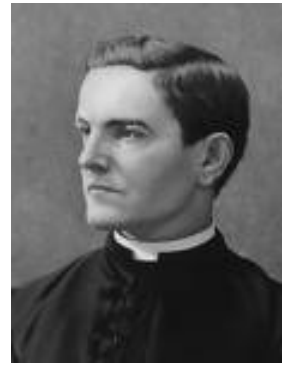


Priest of the Week:



**Fr. Michael McGivney
(1852-1890)
Founder of the Knights of
Columbus**

The eldest of twelve children, McGivney was born on August 12, 1852, in Waterbury, Connecticut. The son of Irish immigrants, his father worked in a brass factory. Graduating three years early from his parish school, McGivney soon began preparations for the priesthood. He was known not only for his intelligence, but also for his friendly personality and athletic abilities. However, his studies were delayed for three years while he worked in a factory to support his family after his father's death.

Returning to his studies, McGivney attended St. Mary Seminary in Baltimore, Maryland. He was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Hartford on December 22, 1877, at the age of 25. He celebrated his first Mass on Christmas Day in his home parish in Waterbury. Assigned the associate pastor of St. Mary Parish in New Haven, Fr. McGivney soon saw two needs of the parish. The first was to encourage Catholic men to be active in their faith. The second was to assist families who through sudden death or injury of a husband and father had been thrown into economic crises, as his had been when his father died.

This second matter was of importance because the anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant bigotry of the time excluded most Catholic men from joining labor unions or getting life insurance. With this purpose he gathered the men of his parish to form an organization that promoted loyalty to the United States, support of the Church, and provide insurance to all its members. The new group was called the Knights of Columbus with membership open to all Catholic men. On March 19, 1882, Connecticut recognized the Knights as an official organization.

Believing that the Knights should be run by laymen, Fr. McGivney soon turned over administrative responsibilities to others, but continued to serve as a chaplain. Other parishes in Connecticut and then throughout the country in a short time established their own Knights of Columbus chapters. In 1885, Fr. McGivney was transferred to another parish in Thomaston to serve as its pastor. Working tirelessly to serve the parishioners, he was committed to working long hours. In 1890 he contracted influenza, which soon became pneumonia. He died on August 14, 1890, two days after his 38th birthday.

The good work he started did not die with him. Today the Knights of Columbus have 1.7 million members in some 1,300 councils in several different countries. In 2004-2005, the Knights worldwide donated \$135 million and 68 million service hours to charity.

Fr. McGivney is currently a candidate for canonization. In 2008, Pope Benedict XVI approved a degree recognizing his heroic virtue. This degree allows Fr. McGivney to be referred to as a "Venerable Servant of God".