



**A NOVENA  
BEFORE THE BEATIFICATION OF  
MICHAEL MCGIVNEY**

October 22-30, 2020

# A NOVENA BEFORE THE BEATIFICATION OF MICHAEL MCGIVNEY

## Introduction

Venerable Michael McGivney, a model parish priest and founder of the Knights of Columbus, was recognized as a “saint” in his day by the people closest to him. When he is named “Blessed” by Pope Francis on October 31, the Church will declare what many have long believed — the holy soul of Father McGivney lives today to intercede for us before the throne of God.

Over the years, thousands of favors have been attributed to Father McGivney’s intercession, as Knights, their families and Catholics throughout the world pray to him in times of need. He is known especially for favors related to employment and finances, reconciling family members, overcoming addiction, recovering from serious illness, as well as conversion and return to the Church. Coinciding with issues Father McGivney dealt with as a parish priest on earth, these favors show his ongoing care and concern for those who call upon him in faith.

In a spirit of total trust in God, we invoke Father McGivney’s intercession during this novena, from Oct. 22-30, mindful of the fact that miracles have occurred in the past for those who pray for a special healing at the time of a beatification. We pray, most of all, that through the holy witness of Father McGivney, many will be brought closer to God and that we ourselves may renew our love of God and neighbor.

Let us open our hearts as we pray over these nine days.

## Day 1 – The Founder’s Family of Faith

Thursday, Oct. 22

*Behold, children are a gift of the LORD;  
the fruit of the womb is a reward (Ps 127:3).*

**Intention:** For the domestic church, the church of the home, seedbed of love and vocation.

**Virtue:** Openness to God’s will.

Although they lived a century before St. John Paul II, whose memorial we observe today (Oct. 22), Patrick and Mary McGivney embodied the late pope’s message on the domestic church: “Family, become what you are” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 17). Formed and blessed by God, the family is the place where parents are privileged to bring forth children and serve as the first examples of human love, unity and fraternity, amid daily joys, sacrifices and suffering. The McGivney family knew the grace of cooperating with God’s will, bringing 13 children into the world, as well as the grief that came when six of those children died as infants. Patrick and Mary had left Ireland’s potato famine for America and were married in Waterbury, Conn. Their first child, Michael Joseph, was born Aug. 12, 1852, and baptized a week later. He took on family responsibility early, watching over his younger siblings, earning honors in school, graduating at age 13, and then joining his father in factory work. Though not rich in material goods, the life of this family abounded in grace, and Michael learned discipline, compassion, and the rough-and-tumble fraternal charity that comes naturally in a large family. The McGivneys also received from God the great gift of vocations, as Michael’s younger brothers, Patrick and John, would join him in the priesthood.

### Petitions

For a deeper appreciation of the importance of family life, that our domestic church may serve as a model of faith, hope and charity. **℟ Grant our prayer, Lord, through the intercession of Father McGivney.**

For holy marriages founded on God’s love, that husbands and wives may have the grace to generously accept the gift of new life. **℟ Grant our prayer, Lord, through the intercession of Father McGivney.**

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## Day 2 – Ordained ‘A Man for Others’

Friday, Oct. 23

*I will raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them;  
and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified,  
nor will any be missing (Jer 23:4).*

**Intention:** For vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life.

**Virtue:** Courage to respond to God’s call.

Young Michael’s desire to be “a man for others” was recognized by his pastor, who encouraged him to enter the seminary at age 16. Yet Michael’s path to the priesthood was neither smooth nor direct. After gaining his father’s permission to leave his work in a Waterbury factory, Michael traveled far, to Canada and upstate New York, to receive the proper education and spiritual formation. After his father died, Michael would have been forced to stay home to support the family if not for a scholarship supplied by the bishop of Hartford to continue studies at St. Mary’s Seminary in Baltimore. He was ordained Dec. 22, 1877, in America’s first cathedral, and returned to Waterbury to celebrate his first public Mass for Christmas, with his widowed mother attending. Assigned to St. Mary’s Church, the first Catholic parish in New Haven, he served a large, mostly immigrant population and worked without a single day off for more than a year, filling in for an ailing pastor. Father McGivney’s experience shows that vocations are discerned and nurtured in a family, encouraged by spiritual advisors, supported by prayer, and tested by adversity. With this example in mind, let us beseech the Lord anew “to send out workers into his harvest” (Mt 9:37-38).

### Petitions

For an increase of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life, that many more men and women may respond to God’s call to serve his people.

**R Grant our prayer, Lord, through the intercession of Father McGivney.**

For a greater collaboration between clergy and laity, that Father McGivney’s example of helping laypeople to understand and live their vocation to holiness may serve as a model for the Church today. **R Grant our prayer, Lord, through the intercession of Father McGivney.**

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## Day 3 – Ministry to the Marginalized

Saturday, Oct. 24

*I have become all things to all men,  
so that I may by all means save some (1 Cor 9:22).*

**Intention:** For all who suffer on the peripheries of society, including immigrants, those persecuted for their Christian faith, and persons who are imprisoned, poor, homeless or addicted.

**Virtue:** Perseverance amid adversity and trials.

Father McGivney did not confine himself to the sacristy or rectory. The needs of his people took him far from the church doors as he served as an advocate for families in court; a friend of those from other Christian faiths; a consoling presence to a prominent Protestant minister whose daughter had died; the director of public plays and fairs; and, of course, the founder of the Knights of Columbus. In these and many other ways, he was a man ahead of his time, anticipating by nearly a century the Second Vatican Council's teachings on ecumenical dialogue, a more active and engaged laity, and the "universal call to holiness."

In a notable case, he ministered to James "Chip" Smith, a 21-year-old Catholic who was on death row for fatally shooting a police officer while drunk. Father McGivney visited him often over many months to offer guidance, prayer and Mass in the city jail, to great effect. The young man's change of heart was so marked that local newspapers hailed Father McGivney's ministry. After Mass on execution day, the priest's grief was profound. Smith comforted him, saying, "Father, your saintly ministrations have enabled me to meet death without a tremor. Do not fear for me, I must not break down now." Father McGivney walked with him to the end, leading him in prayer and blessing him at the scaffold. He still walks with us in our needs today as we look to him for guidance in times of affliction, grief and hopelessness.

### Petitions

For those who are neglected and in need, that we may respond to the Lord's call to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, give shelter to the homeless, care for the sick and visit the imprisoned (see Matt 26:31-46).

**℟ Grant our prayer, Lord, through the intercession of Father McGivney.**

For those throughout the world who are persecuted or killed for their Christian faith, that the Knights of Columbus Christian Refugee Relief Fund may continue to provide help in their time of great need. **℟ Grant our prayer, Lord, through the intercession of Father McGivney.**

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## Day 4 – Founder of the Knights of Columbus

### Sunday, Oct. 25

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers  
to dwell together in unity! (Ps 133:1).*

**Intention:** For Catholic men and their families.

**Virtues:** Charity, unity and fraternity.

The Knights of Columbus grew out of Father McGivney's personal experience. He knew firsthand the hardships families faced when the father of a family died young. He saw Catholic men lured by secret societies that promised brotherhood and financial benefits but whose practices were contrary to the Catholic faith. Yet he also knew the strength and character of Catholic men who kept their faith and worked hard to support their families. A priest of deep prayer and practical action, Father McGivney called together the accomplished, "go-ahead" Catholic men of New Haven for a meeting in the basement of St. Mary's Church. They were to form a new society that would support men in the faith and assist widows and orphans when a member passed away. Summing up the mission of the Knights of Columbus, he wrote, "'Unity and charity' is our motto. Unity in order to gain strength to be charitable to each other in benevolence whilst we live and in bestowing financial aid to those whom we have to mourn." The members of the Order today carry out his vision and mission through a charity that evangelizes, a charity that answers the simple question that lies at the heart of each person: How am I to live, and whom am I to serve? Father McGivney answered these questions with his personal witness of practical sanctity and charity, and his Knights continue to this day to follow in his footsteps through lives devoted to charity, unity and fraternity.

### **Petitions**

For the pursuit of holiness among members of the Knights of Columbus, that according to Father McGivney's vision, Catholic men may step forward to lead, serve and sacrifice. **R Grant our prayer, Lord, through the intercession of Father McGivney.**

For the continued growth of the Knights of Columbus, that many more men may commit to their faith and protect the financial future of their families through membership in the Order. **R Grant our prayer, Lord, through the intercession of Father McGivney.**

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## Day 5 – A Holy Life

Monday, Oct. 26

*Therefore, you are to be perfect,  
as your heavenly Father is perfect (Mt 5:48).*

**Intention:** For the sanctification of clergy and laity in their mutually enriching vocations within the Church.

**Virtue:** Discernment of God's will in our lives.

Father McGivney was a man of few yet effective words who drew upon the Word of God for inspiration. Those who knew him, however, had much to say about his character and manner. They remarked on the inviting tone of his voice, his firm yet friendly demeanor, his popular personality and the positive and lasting impression he made on others. According to one contemporary, parishioners "called him a positive saint, and meant it." A blind man would come each Sunday to hear "that voice." A fellow priest observed, "Father McGivney, though a man of unassuming character, was possessed of an indomitable will." Another priest said he 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 ..." Perhaps the best description came from a contemporary who wrote of his "priest's face ... a face of wonderful repose. There was nothing harsh in that countenance although there was everything that was strong."

### Petitions

For all those who seek a life of holiness in the priesthood, consecrated life, and the lay apostolate, that they may follow Father McGivney in leading "a life unselfishly given to the service of others." **R Grant our prayer, Lord, through the intercession of Father McGivney.**

For a renewal of the practice of frequent sacramental confession and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, that many more Catholics may seek union with God through the forgiveness of their sins and worship of the Real Presence of Jesus. **R Grant our prayer, Lord, through the intercession of Father McGivney.**

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## Day 6 – Shepherd of Souls

Tuesday, Oct. 27

*For I became your father in Christ Jesus  
through the Gospel (1 Cor 4:15).*

**Intention:** For priests who labor in parishes, apostolates and missions.

**Virtue:** Zeal for the salvation of souls.

After seven years at St. Mary's Church, Father McGivney was named pastor of St. Thomas Parish in Thomaston, 30 miles from New Haven, in the northern hills of Connecticut. On his final Sunday at St. Mary's, people wept openly in the pews as he offered his farewell with tears filling his own eyes. He concluded, "Wherever I go, the memory of the people of St. Mary's and their great kindness to me will always be uppermost in my heart." The local newspaper noted, "Never, it seemed, was a congregation so affected by the parting address of a clergyman as the great audience which filled St. Mary's." Relying on the grace of God, Father McGivney was the image of the Good Shepherd in his six years as pastor of St. Thomas Church. His sacramental records show a steady schedule of Mass, baptisms, confessions, anointings, weddings and funerals — the daily labor of a parish priest charged with the care of souls. Knowing the hard life of his people, he also planned for them regular periods of respite and recreation. Soon he was entrusted with a mission church four miles away, Immaculate Conception in Terryville. Ever faithful to his daily duties, Father McGivney would offer an early Sunday Mass in Thomaston, ride the horse-drawn carriage to Terryville for a mid-morning Mass, and return to St. Thomas Church for the noon Mass. This tiring regimen, over rough roads and often in inclement weather, wore down his health. On one occasion, as a Thomaston resident related, Father McGivney lost control of the horse and his carriage crashed into a fence, and he was thrown some distance. Dusting off his cassock and shaking off the bruises, he thanked God for preserving his life and continued his journey. With the Lord leading, nothing would keep him from fulfilling his obligations to his people.

### Petitions

For pastors and all those who serve as shepherds of souls, that they may practice prayerful zeal in carrying out their duties, for the greater glory of God. **℟ Grant our prayer, Lord, through the intercession of Father McGivney.**

For laypeople, that they may offer friendship, support and prayers for priests, who battle on the front lines of spiritual warfare. **℟ Grant our prayer, Lord, through the intercession of Father McGivney.**

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## Day 7 – A Holy Death

### Wednesday, Oct. 28

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time  
are not worthy to be compared with the glory  
that is to be revealed in us (Rom 8:18).*

**Intention:** For the dying and those suffering from serious illness.

**Virtue:** Hope for eternal life.

Falling ill amid the influenza pandemic of 1889-90, Father McGivney traveled far to find effective treatments but always returned to his parish to tend to his duties while his health lasted. In his final days, priests visited to comfort him, learn from him, and administer the Last Rites. For his own part, he prayed fervently for his parishioners and his Knights, offering his sufferings for their spiritual and temporal welfare. A man of practical action till the end, he updated his will, providing for the seminary education of his youngest brother and dividing his goods among his siblings. The flu, known as the “grippe,” that consumed the world’s attention also grabbed hold of his body. He was confined to bed in his rectory for much of the summer before succumbing to the virus, with an underlying condition of tuberculosis, on Aug. 14, 1890, two days past his 38th birthday, on the vigil of the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He was a model of goodness and patience and — in his last priestly act on earth — offered himself to God in a holy death. As one of his Knights remembered, “He was a man of the people. He was zealous of his people’s welfare, and all the kindness of his priestly soul asserted itself more strongly in his unceasing efforts for the betterment of their condition.” The remembrance card at his funeral quoted a passage from the Book of Wisdom that highlighted his holiness of life and closeness to God: “Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time; for his soul pleased God, therefore He hastened to bring him out of the midst of iniquity” (Wis 4:13-14).

### **Petitions**

For our loved ones who have died, that they may soon see the face of God in the land of the living. **R Grant our prayer, Lord, through the intercession of Father McGivney.**

For those who suffer in mind, body or soul, that they may be comforted and healed by God’s gracious hand. **R Grant our prayer, Lord, through the intercession of Father McGivney.**

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## Day 8 – A Legacy of Love

### Thursday, Oct. 29

*Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another;  
for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law (Rom 13:8).*

**Intention:** For the mission of the Knights of Columbus.

**Virtue:** Love of God and neighbor.

Father McGivney had a genius for turning neighbors into friends and friends into brothers. He set the example by serving as a Good Samaritan, stopping to assist, binding up wounds, and caring for the temporal and spiritual welfare of those who had fallen along the wayside of society. In this, he lived out the true meaning of charity — of love: to will the true good of another. Love is a dying to self so that the other may more fully live. Jesus Christ, who is love himself, has told us this — “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (Jn 15:13) — and showed us the authentic face of love on the cross. By forming the Knights of Columbus, Father McGivney was leading men not only to *do something* but to *be someone* — a better person ready to live according to the challenges of love. He knew the full meaning of love and he gave men and their families a way — through charity, unity and fraternity — to live that fullness of the Gospel in their own place and time, in their own homes, parishes and communities. We are invited, in these days leading up to Father McGivney’s beatification, to follow his example, to live out his legacy, to be Catholics who love God above all things and our neighbors as ourselves, as we strive each day to build up the kingdom of God for the good of all.

### Petitions

For Knights in local councils, that their love of God and devotion to Father McGivney will help to build up their parishes and communities. **R Grant our prayer, Lord, through the intercession of Father McGivney.**

For families that suffer from discord or misunderstanding, that they may experience God’s healing, and work toward unity of heart, mind and spirit. **R Grant our prayer, Lord, through the intercession of Father McGivney.**

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## Day 9 – Heavenly Intercessor

Friday, Oct. 30

*Smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints  
from the hand of the angel before God (Rev 8:4).*

**Intention:** For those who seek a miracle.

**Virtue:** Devotion and dedication in prayer.

From the witness of his life on earth, we are convinced of Father McGivney's holiness and heroic virtue. With an approved miracle worked by God through his intercession, we are now assured of the efficacy of his heavenly intercession. Known as an Apostle of Christian Family Life, Father McGivney continues to care for families, marriages and children. He also works through his Knights of Columbus, who bring the principles of charity, unity and fraternity into the everyday lives of people around the world. The miracle that was attributed to his intercession is a perfect example of the life-affirming vision and mission of Father McGivney. It involved the healing from a fatal condition of a child in the womb who was born with Down syndrome into a large, loving family. The parents prayed fervently to Father McGivney for their child to live and asked all their family members and close friends to do the same. Their prayer was answered in a miraculous fashion, and today the boy is an active, thriving 5-year-old.

On October 31, Father McGivney will be declared "Blessed" not for his benefit but for ours. He is being lifted up by the Church as an example for us to follow, as an intercessor for our most heartfelt prayers, as a friend in times of trouble who has gone before us into heaven. Let us rejoice that this model parish priest is being honored in our time for the needs of our world, and call upon Father McGivney for a second miracle that will open the way for his canonization.

### **Petitions**

For all members of the Father Michael J. McGivney Guild, that their many prayers and intentions will be answered in God's time and according to his providence. **R Grant our prayer, Lord, through the intercession of Father McGivney.**

For an increase in devotion to Father McGivney, that Knights and others throughout the world may look to him as a friend and companion in the triumphs and trials of life. **R Grant our prayer, Lord, through the intercession of Father McGivney.**

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# DAILY PRAYERS

## Petitions

For many graces to come through the beatification of Father Michael McGivney, that by his example of virtue we may be inspired to put our faith into action for the good of our families, parishes and communities. **R Grant our prayer, Lord, through the intercession of Father McGivney.**

For the personal petitions of those who pray this novena, and for a miracle from God that will lead to the canonization of Father McGivney. **R Grant our prayer, Lord, through the intercession of Father McGivney.**

*Our Father...*

*Hail Mary...*

*Glory be...*

## Prayer for the Canonization of Father McGivney

God, our Father, protector of the poor and defender of the widow and orphan, you called your priest, Father Michael J. McGivney, to be an apostle of Christian family life and to lead the young to the generous service of their neighbor. Through the example of his life and virtue may we follow your Son, Jesus Christ, more closely, fulfilling his commandment of charity and building up his Body which is the Church. Let the inspiration of your servant prompt us to greater confidence in your love so that we may continue his work of caring for the needy and the outcast. We humbly ask that you glorify your venerable servant Father Michael J. McGivney on earth according to the design of your holy will. Through his intercession, grant the favor I now present (*here make your request*). Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



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