



The Blessed Father Michael J. McGivney Honoris

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In his time,

Michael McGivney came to the priesthood from an immigrant family that had made its way to the United States in hope of a better life. Life was not easy for such families. Many toiled in factories and most lived without a measure of social support.

The future Fr. McGivney, not unlike St. John Paul II, learned on the way to priesthood what it is like to labor in difficult, if not downright dangerous conditions, thus giving him first-hand experience of what his future parishioners had to endure. Yet immigrant families, such as the McGivney's, persevered, not for themselves but for those who would come after them. By most standards, Father McGivney's path to the priesthood was complicated. It was interrupted by the death of his father. It was carried out partially in Canada and partially in the United States. He was formed for the priesthood by seminary faculties drawn from the ranks of the diocesan priesthood, the Vincentians, the Jesuits, and the Sulpicians. This alone must have broadened his vision of the Church and priestly ministry. He excelled in his studies but even more so he excelled in piety and friendship.

He was ordained a priest in the Basilica Cathedral of the Assumption, by then-Archbishop Gibbons, just days before Christmas in 1877. He was ordained into a growing Church that welcomed newcomers. Father McGivney proved to be an extraordinary instrument of Divine Providence in seeing to the growth of the Church in his country and beyond.

When Fr. McGivney arrived at St. Mary's in 1878, the pastor, Fr. Murphy, at the young age of 32, was seriously ill. He had built a beautiful church but it was buried in debt and that took its toll on him. Within six months of ordination, Fr. McGivney was, in effect, serving as pastor.

Stories survive about his ability to relate to young people; he was skilled as a catechist for younger children and made a deep impression on teenagers and young adults. Today we talk about the importance of youth ministry. Fr. McGivney, as usual, didn't theorize. He simply did it and did it well.

While the texts of his sermons cannot be found, we have been told he was a good homilist and by all accounts, Fr. McGivney's was a soft-spoken voice with perfect diction. "That voice" filled his church with the living word of God.

Fr. McGivney as a young priest organized parish picnics, helped with baseball games, he had something for everyone, it seems. How many priests could have done what he did in his first years?

St. John Paul II said that the priest's personality must be a bridge to Christ and indeed Fr. McGivney's unassuming, lighthearted, yet determined character attracted many to the Catholic faith and St. Mary's Church in New Haven.

Fr. McGivney loved the priesthood deeply and lived it for others, including widows, orphans, and outcasts. As Edward Downes said of Fr. McGivney, "he was a man of the people." in this age when we speak so much about evangelization, Fr. McGivney went out into the community and brought many to this church, transforming it from the smallest parish in New Haven to one of the largest. Above all, this young priest "read the signs of the times" in seeing the need for a fraternal organization of men, led by the men themselves, that would strengthen their faith and provide for the financial security of their families.

Blessed Michael J. McGivney, Intercede for us.

Visit the Blessed Father Michael J. McGivney Honoris Ottawa website: <http://www.michaeljmcgivneyhonoris.ca>

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