# McGivney beatification celebrated by local Knights of Columbus

The Knights of Columbus will be celebrating an important milestone in the history of the Catholic Church in North America on Oct. 31 when their founder, Father Michael McGivney, takes one step closer to sainthood.

"It's a gift for the Knights of Columbus that our founder and patron is honoured in this way," said Vince Reyes, state deputy for Alberta and the Northwest Territories. "I think he will eventually be made a saint. I think it's going to happen, and hopefully within my lifetime. Everything is falling into place."



**Rev. Michael McGivney was the founder of Knights of Columbus.**Knights of Columbus

McGivney is the American priest who founded the Knights of Columbus, the fraternal order that supports the Church and community through charitable works and service. He spent some of his formative years in Canada.

Father McGivney will be beatified (given the title "Blessed") during a special Mass broadcast on Salt and Light TV, EWTN and the Catholic TV Network. The Beatification Mass from St. Joseph's Cathedral in Hartford, Conn. will begin at 11 a.m. Eastern time (9 a.m. Alberta). The Knights were founded in Connecticut.

"It's a testament to the foundation of the Knights of Columbus, founded by a parish priest during a pandemic," said Reyes, a member of the Knights of Columbus council at St. Teresa's parish in Edmonton.

The Knights of Columbus has more than two million members in more than 16,000

parish-based councils. In Canada, the first Canadian Knights of Columbus was established in Montreal in 1897. Membership in Canada stands at more than 230,000 and there are 1,900 parish-based councils.

There are 19,190 Knights in Alberta and the Northwest Territories, and Reyes said membership continues to grow every year. Last year, new membership exceeded the 753 quota for the region.

"In very unprecedented times with a pandemic of global proportion, social unrest, riots, financial and global turbulence, we rejoice in celebrating the beatification of a young priest from New Haven, Connecticut, who set into motion a movement to help orphans, widows and anyone in need," the Knights of Columbus said in a statement.

"Father McGivney laboured tirelessly to improve the condition of his 19th-century immigrant community in Connecticut. He founded the Knights of Columbus to provide financial support for widows and orphans, and to keep Catholic men and their families close to their faith at a time of widespread anti-Catholic bigotry."

Pope Francis opened the door for Father McGivney to become a "Blessed" after he recognized a miracle involving the Knights founder after his death. The 2015 miracle involved a U.S. baby, in utero, who survived a life-threatening condition after the parents prayed to Father McGivney.

That baby, Mikey Schachle, is now 5. His parents, Dan and Michelle of Dickson, Tenn., prayed to Father McGivney to intercede with God to save their son, still in his mother's womb, who was given no hope of surviving a life-threatening case of fetal hydrops.

Reyes said other miracles are being investigated by the Vatican, which would put Father McGivney on the path closer to sainthood.



**Rev. Michael McGivney, who founded the Knights of Columbus, will be beatified on October 31, 2020, spent two years of his early formation in Canada.**Knights of Columbus

McGivney, who was born in 1852 and died in 1890, was a key figure in the growth

of the Catholic Church in the United States. He attended the College of St. Hyacinthe in Quebec at the age of 16 to prepare for the seminary application process. During his two years at the college he immersed himself into the French-Canadian culture.

McGivney was ordained in the United States in 1877 and ended up in New Haven, Conn., where he founded the Knights to provide spiritual support for Catholic men and financial resources for families.

"Father McGivney died of pneumonia on August 14, 1890 — two days after his 38th birthday — after falling ill amid a pandemic," according to the Knights of Columbus. "Recent scientific evidence indicates that the pandemic — like the current one — may have been caused by a coronavirus."

The Oct. 31 beatification ceremony is just one of the many honours that the Catholic Church and the Vatican have bestowed on Father McGivney. In a decree by Pope Benedict XVI in 2008, Father McGivney was declared a Venerable Servant of God.

"Concerning the theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love both toward God and neighbor as well as the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude, and those others joined to them, they existed to a heroic degree in the Servant of God Michael McGivney, Diocesan Priest and Founder of the Fraternal Order the Knights of Columbus," Pope Benedict's decree said.

*-With files from Brian Dryden, Canadian Catholic News*