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## **Vatican Approves Decree of 'Heroic Virtue'**

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**Father Michael J. McGivney would be first American born priest to be declared a saint.**

Pope Benedict XVI Saturday approved a decree recognizing the heroic virtue of Father Michael J. McGivney, founder of the Knights of Columbus. The pope's declaration significantly advances the priest's process toward sainthood and gives the parish priest the distinction of "Venerable Servant of God." If canonized, Father McGivney would be the first American born priest to be so honored.

"All of us who are members of the Knights of Columbus are profoundly grateful for this recognition by the holiness of our founder," said Supreme Knight Carl Anderson. "The strength of the Knights of Columbus today is a testament to his timeless vision, his holiness and his ideals." Worried about the religious faith and financial stability of immigrant families, Father McGivney founded the Knights of Columbus with the help of several men of St. Mary's Parish in New Haven in 1882. He hoped to help strengthen the faith of the men of his parish and to provide financial assistance in the event of their death to the widows and orphans they left behind. He was also known for his tireless work among his parishioners.

Born in Waterbury, Conn., Aug. 12, 1852, Michael Joseph McGivney, was the first of Patrick and Mary (Lynch) McGivney's 13 children, six of whom died in infancy or early childhood. His parents, natives of Ireland, had immigrated to the United States during the 19th century. Patrick was a molder in a Waterbury brass mill, where Michael himself worked for a brief time as a child to help support the family. From an early age, however, he realized a calling to the Catholic priesthood. After studying in several seminaries, he was ordained in Baltimore's historic Cathedral by Cardinal James Gibbons Dec. 22, 1877. He took up his first assignment, as curate at St. Mary's Church, New Haven, Conn., Jan. 2, 1878. Father McGivney was named pastor of St. Thomas Church in Thomaston, Conn. in 1884. He became seriously ill with pneumonia in January 1890, and died August 14, 1890 at age 38. Hartford Archbishop Daniel A. Cronin opened the cause, or process, for Father McGivney's sainthood, in December 1997. The cause was presented to the Vatican in 2000, where it has been under review by the congregation for the Causes of Saints. With the pope's recent decree, and the authentication of a miracle at Father McGivney's intercession, the priest could be beatified (required for canonization).