



*Our local chapter of the Knights of Columbus will be presenting several articles providing information about our founder Michael J. McGivney, our patron, Christopher Columbus along with other informational articles about the Knights of Columbus.*

## **Fr. Michael McGivney**

*Deacon Tim Barnes*

Only about 58 miles south of Hopkinsville is the city of Dixon, Tennessee. Dixon is the home of five-year-old Mikey Schachle. While he was still in his mother's womb, Mikey was diagnosed with a condition known as fetal hydrops. This is a serious condition defined as abnormal accumulation of fluid in two or more fetal compartments and most often is fatal. Mikey's parents prayed to Fr. McGivney to intercede to God for the healing of their baby. Last May, Pope Francis declared this intercession of Fr. McGivney to be a miracle and thus cleared the way for Fr. McGivney to be declared a saint. On October 31 of this year Fr. McGivney will be beatified during a special Mass Oct. 31 at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Hartford, Connecticut.



Father Michael McGivney occupies one of the windows in the narthex of our church. He is best known for founding the Knights of Columbus, but just who is he? Father Michael McGivney was born August 12, 1852 of Irish immigrant parents. His early home was Waterbury, Connecticut. Growing up in the mid nineteenth century, McGivney was aware of the difficult situation that transpired within families of the time when the death of the primary wage earner meant devastation for the family. In the mid nineteenth century large families were the norm- and not just for Catholics. McGivney was the oldest of 13 (six whom died in infancy). The death of a father who had been the bread winner would often mean the break-up of a family as the children may be sent off to different relatives or orphanages. Life was hard in the 1800's and life expectancy was not long so the horror of losing the primary breadwinner was not uncommon.

This was the world as viewed by McGivney. He did not like what he saw. He did not like seeing families being broken up. He did not like seeing families being thrown into poverty. Father McGivney came up with the idea of creating a Catholic men's organization which would assist families- widows and orphans, who were threatened by poverty. The Knights of Columbus was the brainchild of McGivney. There were others who assisted and helped shape the organization, but McGivney was most concerned that the organization provide some sort of assistance to the families of members who died or aid to families in the case of an extended illness which prevented a man from working. Life insurance existed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but it was mostly for the well to do. McGivney's vision for the Knights of Columbus was of an organization to serve the working men of the day. The Knights of Columbus grew rapidly because Catholic men of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw such an organization as providing security for their families.

It should be mentioned the Fr. McGivney was able to bring his vision to reality before his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. This is a statement of his hard work, determination, and a reminder that young people can do great things.