

Wednesday of the 29th Week of Ordinary Time

Homily of Bishop Barres

St. Agnes Cathedral

October 21, 2020

October 21, 1989 is the day I was ordained to the Catholic priesthood so today at this Mass I celebrate with all of you and our Catholic Faith Network viewers my 31st anniversary of Ordination to the priesthood.

I share this with you because I want to ask all of you to pray, as I so often do, for a bold and rich harvest of holy vocations to the Catholic priesthood on Long Island.

I find the section from Isaiah 12 that we heard this morning a beautiful sentiment to celebrate on an anniversary where we give God thanks for the past and express our trust in Him in the present and the future. The passage reads: “God indeed is my savior; I am confident and unafraid. My strength and my courage is the Lord, and he has been my savior. With joy you will draw water at the fountain of salvation.”

All of us are called – in the spirit of stewardship and vigilance outlined in Luke 12 – to pray for holy vocations to the Catholic priesthood to serve the Church and the World.

We have a key moment in Catholic Church history in the United States of America on October 31, 2020 to celebrate the heroism, pastoral charity and evangelizing zeal of holy Catholic priests in the history of our nation.

We join with Catholics around the world in celebrating on October 31, 2020 the Beatification of Fr. Michael J. McGivney, a diocesan priest and the Founder of the Knights of Columbus.

I look forward to celebrating a Mass at St. Mary’s parish in New Haven, CT, where Fr. McGivney served as an assistant, established the Knights, and where his body now rests, just hours after the Beatification Mass is completed at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in the Archdiocese of Hartford.

We will be present with some of our seminarians, our priests, our University students -- accompanied by Fr. Lachlan Cameron, Director of Campus Ministry and Chaplain

of Stony Brook University -- and our dedicated Knights of Columbus from Long Island.

We will be asking the intercession of Blessed Fr. Michael J. McGivney for a rich new harvest of vocations to the priesthood for Long Island and everywhere around the world. We will be asking his intercession too for all of you, your families and your intentions.

Fr. Joseph G. Dailey, a contemporary of Fr. McGivney, gives this moving account of meeting Fr. McGivney in 1883. He writes: "Fr. McGivney himself was anything but aristocratic; he was a man of extreme grace of manner in any society, but without any airs...I saw him but once and yet I remember his pale, beautiful face as if I saw it only yesterday; it was a 'a priest's face,' and that explains everything. It was a face of wonderful repose; there was nothing harsh in that countenance, although there was everything that was strong; there was nothing sordid, nothing mercenary, nothing of the politician, nothing of the axe-grinder. Guile and ambition were as far from him as from heaven. To meet him was at once to trust him; children actually loved him; and the very old people of the neighborhood, whom he hunted up and who got part of his time even on busiest days, called him a positive saint and meant it. At the city jail the wardens still hand down anecdotes of what Father McGivney said and did during visits which he paid the prisoners. Elsewhere, too, incidents abound to his credit. A blind, aged man who used to live by charity, but who was not a Catholic went every Sunday to Mass at St. Mary's to hear 'that voice.' Non-Catholics found in Father McGivney a soul of immense sympathy, which invited them strongly toward investigating the religious truths his lips proclaimed."

We take this opportunity to celebrate Fr. McGivney's spirit of holiness and mission manifested to this day in the global mission of the Knights of Columbus.

We give thanks to God for our beloved Knights of Columbus and all the incredible work they do to support our evangelizing parishes on Long Island.

And we give thanks for all those faces of Catholic priests that have reflected the Face of Christ to us. We celebrate today Christ's gift of the Catholic priesthood to the Church and to the World.