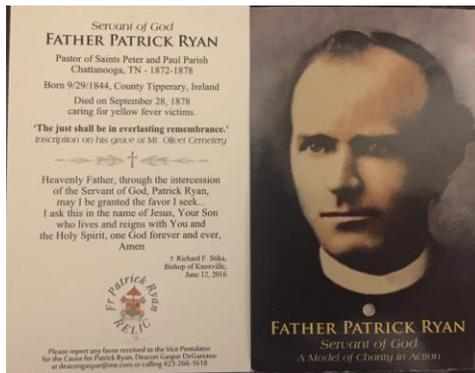


**Homily for 9/27/20 Twenty-sixth Sunday in
Ordinary Time
Lectionary: 136
JMJ+come Holy Spirit
Genesis of the Cause for Fr Ryan
by Dcn. Gaspar DeGaetano**



Nothing I am about to say should be interpreted to prejudge the Church's determination regarding the Cause for the Beatification and Canonization of the Servant of God, Patrick Ryan, Priest of Chattanooga and former Pastor of this our Sts Peter and Paul Parish from 1872-1878.

Having said that, here we go with the story of a sainthood Cause which I feel whose time has come!

**In August of 2015,
as part of my transfer process,
from St Jude to this Parish,
I was wisely required with my wife, Barbara and
Father David Carter to come up with a
memorandum of understanding for my
diaconal services.**

**It's an important start for the new relationship
between both the new pastor and the new
Deacon with the approval of the Deacon's wife
who is his other half in his first Sacrament of
service,
which is his marriage.**

**So we invited Father Carter to our house for
dinner and to develop the memorandum.**

**As one of the items for the agreement, Father
David wanted me to transfer my Knights of
Columbus membership back to Council 610 in
conjunction with my transfer to the Basilica.**

**This would encourage a closer relationship
between the parish and the council.**

**So we added the transfer to Council 610 to my
services as a deacon at the Basilica and
wrapped up a draft of the memorandum of**

**understanding for the three of us to sign -
between Barbara, Father David and me.**

**After this draft completion,
as I was walking Father Carter to the door of
our house,
and while first confirming with him that the
Council name was the Patrick Ryan Council,
the thought popped into my head of asking him
if I could explore the Canonization of Father
Patrick Ryan
and Father Carter said yes!**

**No, I didn't hear a voice,
but I'd like to think it was an inspiration from
the Holy Spirit in accordance with the verse:**

**“My sheep hear my voice, says the Lord;
I know them, and they follow me.”**

**And I must admit that the thought of working
on a Cause of Sainthood was quite exciting to
me!**

**This was a very critical yes towards the
initiation of this Sainthood Cause and an early
sign that it was the right time.**

**So after I did some preliminary research on the Internet,
that lead me to the State of Tennessee, History
Museum site,
I added the following task to the final
memorandum:**

**“Explore canonization process for Father
Patrick J. Ryan, priest at St. Peter and St. Paul
Catholic Church from 1872 and 1878 who died
caring for yellow fever epidemic victims.”**

**In the Gospel about working in the vineyard:
'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.'
I am so grateful that Fr Carter allowed me to
pursue this exploratory work in this very
special part of the Church's vineyard,
which is the postulation of a sainthood Cause.
I would end up officially becoming the Vice
Roman Postulator and the Diocesan Postulator
for the Cause.**

**Very soon after the beginning of September
when I started my assignment at the Basilica, I
visited the Chattanooga Public Library, where I
was given a treasure trove of historical**

information related to Father Ryan and the yellow fever epidemic of 1878, and found out that he was a local hero. Significantly, I was made aware of the Centenary, our parish history book issued by the parish of Saints Peter and Paul in 1952, under the compilation authorship of the then pastor, Father Flanegin, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the parish in 1852.

The library had a bound copy of the Centenary. I was very pleased to find several copies at the parish office. That book has become the basis for much of our research and information about Fr. Ryan. Another sign!

Very encouraged by these findings, I started to design a memorial holy card with the intention of making people aware of Father Patrick Ryan and to publicize the good example of his charity and to ask God that we follow him as a model of “Charity in Action” and to just pray for his soul as you would with any Holy Card for a deceased Catholic.

Father Carter celebrated a Traditional Latin Requiem Mass for Father Ryan on September 28, 2015 on the 137th anniversary of his death.

Preliminary research continued on what it would take to have an official Cause for the sainthood of Father Patrick Ryan.

A great turning point for the Cause came with a visit to Italy on a parish pilgrimage lead by Barbara and me in April 2016.

I suggested we obtain an audience with the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints at the Vatican.

Fr Carter and I were successful in getting an appointment with an American Monsignor at the Congregation. The American Monsignor was very encouraging of us to develop the Cause further, starting on the Diocesan level which Bishop Stika thankfully initiated on June 14, 2016 formally designating Father Ryan as a Servant of God. Another sign!

This formal Cause became the first official Cause for sainthood known to us in the state of Tennessee and Kentucky, the whole Province of Louisville, which is under our former Bishop and now the

Archbishop of Louisville Joseph Kurtz. Another sign!

At that 2016 meeting at the Vatican, I was apologetic about Fr Ryan being called a martyr in his time, however the Monsignor indicated that they were working on a new category of sainthood for people who gave their lives in the service of charity especially when a contagious disease was involved and I was lead to believe that it might end up being called a Martyr of Charity.

It was only a little over a year later in 2017 when Pope Francis came out with what's called a Moto Proprio that described a new category of sainthood called the Offering of Life.

Another very definite sign that our timing is blessed. And we understand from Bishop Stika's recent visit to the Vatican, that our case was even a model for the category! Another sign!

Up until 2017, the Church had only had two other categories.

The first category was Martyr,

**to my left you see Saint Paul's martyrdom and
to my right you have Saint Peter's
one by beheading
and the other by crucifixion upside down.
Perhaps around the fifth century, Heroic Life
was made a category of Sainthood. Our new
category only came out in 2017, a little over a
year after visiting with the Monsignor.**

**Only the third category in 2000 years!
Not just to be repetitive,
but I can't resist saying:
another sign!**

**Our Historical Commission, consisting of
parishioners Mike Meehan, Mary Portera and
John Hilgeman
has been using this criteria issued in the Moto
Proprio as a guide for their report on Father
Ryan. My wife Barbara was a member of the
Commission until she passed away.**

**Tomorrow at 10:30 am,
here in the Basilica,
there will be a formal opening of the first
Diocesan session for the inquiry into the cause
of Fr Ryan.**

Bishop Stika will be presiding and this will be the opening session for a tribunal that will analyze the cause for Fr Ryan.

The tribunal consists of Father David Carter as the Bishop's delegate, Father John Orr as the promoter of justice also known as the devil's advocate and Deacon Hicks Armor as the notary.

They will review the Historical Commission Report which also will include parishioner accounts of favors granted through intercessory prayer through Father Ryan.

These favors granted may not necessarily rigorously prove out to be miracles towards sainthood but they do show devotion of the faithful and their feelings of intercessory power from Father Patrick Ryan. I must say it again, ANOTHER SIGN!

The Tribunal will prepare a final report for the approval of Bishop Stika, after which the report will go to Rome to the Causes for the Saints for their review and if they find that our Cause is worthy,

**they may prepare a report to recommend to Pope Francis that the Pope declare Father Patrick Ryan as Venerable.
Step two towards Canonization.**

It takes two proved miracles for Father Ryan to be declared a saint:

the first one would make him Blessed and the second one would make him a canonized Saint.

The miracles must first be reviewed in the Diocese where it was claimed to have happened and then again in Rome, before the pope would accept it.

Who would've imagined that in our lifetimes we would face an epidemic type situation as we face today with the effects of the nasty virus that came from China.

To me this is another and perhaps the greatest sign that this cause was indeed a Cause whose time has come!

And how blessed we all are to pursue it right here in our parish!

St Paul told the Phillipians:

**“Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory;
rather,
humbly regard others as more important than yourselves,
each looking out not for his own interests,
but also for those of others.”**

Father Patrick Ryan did not abandon Chattanooga when the yellow fever struck her and leave town as so many did.

In closing, let me read you an account about the unselfish work of Father Ryan from an editorial from the Chattanooga Times of November 12, 1886 which may have been written by the Jewish Adolf Ochs:

"The reburial of Father Patrick Ryan yesterday roused into vivid realization the terrible scene of September and October, 1878, in the retrospective vision of all who were his co-workers in that trying season.

The brave and faithful priest literally laid down his life in the cause of humanity. Only the morning before he was stricken with the deadly pestilence, the writer met him on his rounds of mercy in the worst infected section of the city. Cheerfully but resolutely he was going from house to house to find what he could do for the sick and needy.

Then the work of the destroyer was upon him, but he looked the one whose spirit had conquered the flesh, like one so absorbed in of dangers of afflictions of his fellow men that he was unconscious of personal suffering, unmindful of personal evil.

We shall never, to the hour we close our eyes for the last time, forget the unselfish and efficient work of Father Ryan and his elder eminent brother, Father John.

It was peculiarly meet and very touching the respect shown the dead father's remains yesterday by many of the chief survivors of that terrible fall.

This was without regard to religious connections, as it should be.

They were on a level then. The yellow scourge was no respecter of persons or creeds."

So said the glowing editorial!

May we through the intercession of the Servant of God Patrick Ryan, “The brave and faithful priest” of the yellow fever epidemic of 1878 see a quick end to the pandemic of our own time.

So, as we prepare to receive Jesus Christ, in the humble form of bread, Let us give thanks for the “The brave and faithful” example of our own Servant of God, Father Patrick Ryan.