The Servant of God Fr. Patrick Ryan was born in Ireland near Nenagh, County Tipperary in the year 1844. Having emigrated to the United States he subsequently entered the seminary and was ordained for the Diocese of Nashville, which at that time covered the whole State of Tennessee. He served as pastor of the parish of Sts. Peter and Paul in Chattanooga from 1872-1878. During the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1878, he bravely and heroically ministered to those afflicted by that dread disease, while fully knowing the grave peril to his own health. An eyewitness testified that the priest was “going from house to house in the worst-infected section of the city to find what he could do for the sick and needy.” During that heroic offering of his life in service to Christian Charity, he contracted Yellow Fever and died on September 28, 1878, at only 33 years of age. After his death he was hailed as a hero of the epidemic by the citizens of Chattanooga and his grave was a hallowed spot, kept beautiful by the hands of those who revered his memory. A magnificent tribute was paid to him when his remains were reburied in Mt. Olivet Cemetery in 1886. One of the longest corteges ever seen in Chattanooga followed his body to the new graveyard.

Fr. Ryan was known for his holiness and the heroic offering of his life for charity’s sake, having given great example of the Gospel call to lay down one’s life for one’s friends (John 15:13). This notoriety caused his name to be memorialized in the Knights of Columbus Council 610 and its Fourth Degree Assembly 1084 some thirty-six years after his death. His reputation as a local hero, owing to his offer of life during the epidemic, was kept alive by these Knights of Columbus and Church historians for over one hundred years. This witness prompted the Postulator, Dr. Waldery Hilgeman, to formally request that we begin a cause for beatification and canonization. Having brought this cause to the knowledge of the Church Community, we invite all the faithful to communicate directly with us all information they may have which might in any way help us, either favorable or contrary, to understand the notoriety of sanctity and the offering of life of the abovementioned Servant of God, Fr. Patrick Ryan.

Furthermore, needing to gather, according to canonical norms, all the writings attributed to him, diaries, letters or every other private writing in anyway relevant to the cause, we order, with the present edict, to those who might be in possession of them, to send them with due solicitude to the Diocesan Tribunal located at the Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul, 214 E. 8th Street, Chattanooga, TN, 37402. Those wishing to conserve the originals may present a duly authenticated copy.

In Conclusion, we establish that this present edict be published in The East Tennessee Catholic along with the portrait of the Servant of God, Fr. Patrick Ryan.

Given at Knoxville, TN this 7th day of April, 2022

RICHARD FRANK STIKA
Bishop of Knoxville

REV. DEACON SEAN K. SMITH
Chancellor