

BY: Senator LANZA

COMMEMORATING the 50th Anniversary of the death of
Father Vincent Capodanno

WHEREAS, The courage and bravery of our military personnel will ensure our continued role as a Nation which embodies the ideals of democracy, and as a defender of liberty for people throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, Chaplains of the Armed Forces, who have served so valiantly and honorably and devoted themselves to serving the men and women of the United States Armed Forces, deserve a special salute from this Legislative Body; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the death of Father Vincent Capodanno at a special mass led by Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan on Sunday, September 3, 2017; and

WHEREAS, In addition, on Tuesday, September 5, 2017, thousands of people will come together to pay just tribute to this remarkable man and hero at The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.; and

WHEREAS, The Catholic Church has recognized that Father Vincent Capodanno's life is worth imitating and should be held up as an example to the faithful followers of the universal Church; well on his way to being canonized, Father Vincent Capodanno will be the 4th American born Saint in our Nation's history; and

WHEREAS, Vincent Robert Capodanno was the 10th child born to Italian immigrants, Vincent Robert Capodanno, Sr. and Rachel Basile Capodanno on February 13, 1929, in Staten Island, New York; through the example of his parents, Vincent Jr. experienced the dignity of hard work, pride of family, strength of ethnic solidarity and most especially, love of their Catholic faith; and

WHEREAS, The American involvement in World War II impacted Vincent R. Capodanno personally with three of his brothers serving in the military, and fostered in him a profound patriotism and overt faith; and

WHEREAS, Vincent R. Capodanno was called to share his faith by responding to peoples' needs in Foreign Service and subsequently, applied and was accepted into the Catholic Foreign Mission Society, the Maryknolls; and

WHEREAS, After nine years of intensive preparation in theology, academics, and basic survival tactics to fulfill the order's mission to "Go and Teach All Nations," Vincent R. Capodanno completed his seminary training and was ordained in 1958, by Francis Cardinal Spellman,

Archbishop of New York; and

WHEREAS, Father Vincent R. Capodanno's first assignment was with aboriginal Taiwanese natives in the mountains of Taiwan; after arriving in 1959, he immediately began studying the difficult language and acclimating to the culture of his future parishioners, the Hakka-Chinese; while serving that community, he administered the sacraments, taught native catechists, and distributed food and medicine; and

WHEREAS, After seven years, Father Vincent Capodanno returned to the United States for leave and then was assigned to a Maryknoll school in Hong Kong; and

WHEREAS, In December of 1965, Father Capodanno received his commission as a Lieutenant in the United States Navy Chaplain Corps, and was assigned to the First Marine Division in Vietnam in April of 1966; and

WHEREAS, As the Chaplain for the battalion, Father Vincent Capodanno's immediate focus was the young enlisted troops or "Grunts"; he was then transferred to a medical unit, where he became a constant companion to the Marines: living, eating, and sleeping in the same conditions as the men; and

WHEREAS, Throughout his tenure, Father Vincent R. Capodanno established libraries, gathered and distributed gifts and organized outreach programs for the local villagers; he also spent hours reassuring the weary and disillusioned, consoling the grieving, hearing confessions, instructing converts, and distributing St. Christopher medals; and

WHEREAS, On September 4, 1967, during his second tour with the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, Father Vincent R. Capodanno made the ultimate sacrifice; after hours of heavy fighting from a North Vietnamese ambush, Father Capodanno, himself seriously injured, sighted a wounded corpsman pinned down by an enemy machine gunner; he ran to the Marine and administered medical and spiritual attention; and

WHEREAS, Despite being unarmed, the enemy opened fire and Father Vincent Capodanno, the victim of 27 bullet wounds, died at the young age of 38, faithfully performing his final act as a good and faithful servant of God; and

WHEREAS, Posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor in 1969, Lieutenant Vincent Capodanno was also the recipient of the Navy Bronze Star medal, the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Silver Star and the Purple Heart Medal; and

WHEREAS, Soon after his death, the first chapel bearing his name was dedicated on Hill 51 in Que Son Valley, Vietnam, a simple place of prayer and peace that he constructed of thatched palms and bamboo; and

WHEREAS, In recognition of his legendary bravery, numerous military chapels were dedicated in his honor in the United States, Japan, and

Taiwan, the last of which recognizes the missionary who began his work in that country; and

WHEREAS, A particularly prestigious memorial was the naming of the USS Capodanno, a ship whose motto "Duty with Honor" exemplified the valiant service of Father Vincent Capodanno; his name appears on many other veteran memorials throughout the United States honoring individual servicemen and certain designated groups; and

WHEREAS, The continuation of these acknowledgments demonstrates the enduring love and respect that Father Vincent R. Capodanno inspires; since his death in 1967, people wishing to honor his memory have chosen specific and eloquent ways to honor the holiness that this man of God radiated in his lifetime and afterward; and

WHEREAS, The valor honored is that of an American soldier who never fired a gun, but wielded the mighty weapon of love for his comrades which was so pure that he was willing to die so that they might live; and

WHEREAS, The freedoms and security we cherish as Americans come at a very high price for those serving in the military in times of conflict; it is fitting and proper that we who are the beneficiaries of those who risk their lives, leaving their families behind, express our appreciation and eternal gratitude for their sacrifices and courageous acts; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the death of Father Vincent R. Capodanno, and to pay tribute to him for his courageous actions; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Gloria Capodanno Holman, James Capodanno, Jr., Vincent Capodanno, Robert Holman, Al Lambert and The Father Vincent Capodanno Family Association.