

BY: Senator GRIFFO

COMMEMORATING the 125th Anniversary of St. Mary of Mount Carmel Church of Utica, New York

WHEREAS, Religious institutions, and the many spiritual, social and educational benefits they confer, play a vital role in the development of the moral fabric of a responsible citizenry; and

WHEREAS, It is the tradition of this State and this Nation to pay tribute to those institutions and individuals who have contributed to the ethical and spiritual values of their communities; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body takes pleasure in commemorating the 125th Anniversary of St. Mary of Mount Carmel Church of Utica, New York, which was celebrated with a myriad of events on Sunday, July 18, 2021; and

WHEREAS, In 1865, Michael Kernan returned to his native Utica with his wife, Cecilia Rapetti Kernan, who later helped Italian immigrant families find work, learn the English language and introduced them to St. John's Parish; and

WHEREAS, As the textile industry grew, more and more Italian immigrants settled in Utica and with the guidance of Father Antonio Castelli, they decided to form their own church; with the help of many, the Italian church of Santa Maria di Monte Carmela, St. Mary of Mount Carmel Church, was organized and incorporated into the Catholic Diocese of Syracuse, New York in July of 1895; and

WHEREAS, With support from the community, parishioners of St. Mary of Mount Carmel Church, under the leadership of Father Antonio Castelli, celebrated Mass for the first time in their new church building on Sunday, December 20, 1896; and

WHEREAS, In the next few years, the parishioners built a rectory, the Society of St. Mary of Mount Carmel was formed, and a new church was built to meet the needs of the growing parish; and

WHEREAS, Unfortunately, Father Antonio Castelli passed away on October 22, 1903, and Father Joseph Formia assumed his position; after Father Formia organized the parish school he returned to Italy and Father John Marchegiani became his successor; under his guidance, the church, school and convent were renovated and enlarged; and

WHEREAS, In June of 1934, Father William Pizzoglio became the pastor of St. Mary of Mount Carmel Church and during World War II, he kept in touch with thousands of Italian boys and parishioners who left Utica for the war fronts; he also opened a clinic for children on Elizabeth street and opened a nursery for the women who went to work in factories; and

WHEREAS, From December of 1950 to October of 1964, Father Joseph

Berton served as pastor of the church, and during his tenure, he continued to make numerous improvements; upon his departure, Father

Peter Bortolazzo, followed by Father John Corrado continued to enlarge, embellish and maintain the beautiful church; and

WHEREAS, In the Fall of 1983, Father Henry Benin took over the helm of the church, and reorganized the convent and school and implemented numerous new ministries; and

WHEREAS, From 1991-2002, Father Joseph Salerno served as the charismatic pastor of the church; he was devoted to renewal in the celebration of the sacraments and promoted the growth and revitalization of many new ministries; he was also instrumental in the construction of elderly housing on Catherine Street and organized the 100th Anniversary of the church; and

WHEREAS, Father John Rose then led the church for approximately five years before Father James Cesta assumed the role in July of 2009; through the last 12 years, he has strived to preach the good news of the gospel and make it clear, understandable and helpful for daily living and to make weekend Mass a Catholic experience that leaves people feeling better when they leave church than when they entered; and

WHEREAS, St. Mary of Mount Carmel Church stands on the threshold of tomorrow, prepared to meet the challenges of the coming decades while retaining that spiritual resolve which characterizes its past; and

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to take note of enduring religious institutions and to bring such institutions to the attention of the people of this Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 125th Anniversary of St. Mary of Mount Carmel Church, fully confident that this commemoration reflects the belief in those values which enhance the dignity and purpose of life; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to The Reverend James Cesta, Pastor, St. Mary of Mount Carmel Church.