

BY: Senator RATH

COMMEMORATING the 185th Anniversary of Saints Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Church of Williamsville, 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, Attendant to such concern and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 185th Anniversary of Saints Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Church of Williamsville, New York, to be celebrated with a myriad of events on Sunday, May 23, 2021; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, during this momentous "1836 Event - Honoring Faith. Community. History," the parish will formally introduce its new pastor, Reverend Matt Nycz; and

WHEREAS, In 1836, a newly ordained Catholic priest from the Czech Republic, Reverend John Neumann, founded what is now known as Saints Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Church; and

WHEREAS, Saints Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Church is the second oldest in the Diocese of Buffalo and its school is the longest continually operating Catholic school in the Diocese of Buffalo; and

WHEREAS, On July 12, 1836, John Neumann, a 25-year-old recently ordained priest, arrived in Buffalo, New York; the young priest was eager to engage in the missionary life among the widely scattered Germans of the area; and

WHEREAS, Sent to take charge of the mission outside of Buffalo and to establish headquarters in Williamsville, Father Neumann found a mission of about 40 families, some living in the village, with others scattered throughout the surrounding district; and

WHEREAS, Some years before, the people had determined to establish a church in the village; the project had been encouraged by the resident pastor in the Buffalo area, but the necessary impulse to begin the project was lacking; and

WHEREAS, In 1834, Oziel Smith, a non-Catholic wishing to establish a community church in the village, offered to donate a small parcel of land for that purpose upon condition that the church would be built of stone; the land was situated at the western corner of Main and Grove Streets; the offer of it was accepted and everyone helped in its

construction; and

WHEREAS, When Father Neumann arrived in July of 1836, the walls of the church were already erected, though the building could boast neither roof nor floor when the services were first held within the unadorned walls; a temporary altar and a few rough benches were the only signs which showed that the church was being used; and

WHEREAS, Finally, towards the end of the year, the church was completed and the young pastor, seeing the need of the children for both secular and religious instruction, now assumed the duties of a teacher; he held classes first in the home of a parishioner and then in a small rented building; his pastorate continued here until the autumn of 1840, at which time he joined the Redemptorist Society; and

WHEREAS, In 1977, this humble and dedicated priest was canonized a saint by Pope Paul VI; his feast is celebrated on January 5th; and

WHEREAS, In the years immediately following Father Neumann's pastorate, a number of priests served for two- or three-year periods, including a Jesuit community of four priests; by 1856, the need for a new and larger church was recognized and a plot of land was purchased from Betsy Grove in 1857, the location where the church continues to stand today; and

WHEREAS, The home of Betsy Grove was moved to make way for the construction of the church; this house then served as a school; the dedication of the new church took place in 1866; the stone for the church was taken from a quarry then at Main and Kensington, and two large bells for the church tower were purchased in 1868 for the clock tower; they joined a smaller bell which had been cast in Strasburg in 1806, and which is currently positioned next to the flag pole on the west side of the church; and

WHEREAS, During the pastorate of Monsignor George Zimpfer (1945-1973), the church was renovated, and a new tower bell was donated by the pastor and the parishioners; and

WHEREAS, Under Monsignor David Gallivan, old rectory quarters in the school building were changed to parish offices and meeting space to accommodate growth; a house was purchased on Glen Avenue, which serves as the current rectory; and

WHEREAS, Monsignor Gallivan was in the new rectory just a few months when Reverend James O'Connor arrived in 1999, during which time, the interior of the church was repainted to reflect the beauty of her gothic architecture; and

WHEREAS, Saints Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Church's latest pastor, Reverend Jerome Kopec began his pastorate on January 22, 2005, and served the parish for 15 years; during his tenure, the parish celebrated its 175th Anniversary and many new enhancements were added to the church, including the erection of the Everlasting Prayer Garden; and

WHEREAS, Today, Saints Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Church stands

on the threshold of tomorrow, prepared to meet the challenges of the coming decades, while retaining that spiritual resolve which has so characterized its glorious 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 185th Anniversary of Saints Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Church of Williamsville, New York, 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 Saints Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Church of Williamsville, New York.