

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 30

BY SENATOR BOUDREAUX

A RESOLUTION

To commend and congratulate the Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church on the occasion of its Ninetieth Anniversary celebration.

WHEREAS, Arnold Janssen, a diocesan priest founded the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) in the Netherlands on September 8, 1875, drawing mostly from German priests and religious exiles in the Netherlands, and by 1882, society missionaries were being sent into China, Africa, Australia, the Philippines, Austria, the United Kingdom, the United States and many other locations across the world; and

WHEREAS, in 1905, SVD missionaries were working in African-American parishes in Mississippi and St. Augustine Seminary, and since May, 1929, SVD missionaries have been in charge of the Holy Rosary Institute in Lafayette where Father Herman Palzelt, the director of the Holy Rosary Institute, built a rectory and school for the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish using private donations from across the country; and

WHEREAS, with only two African-American priests in the entire country, the first bishop of the Diocese of Lafayette, the late Bishop Jules B. Jeanmard, proposing a place for African-American priests to serve the Lord, accepted four African-American priests newly ordained on May 23, 1934, by the SVD at St. Augustine Seminary, Bay St. Louis, Mississippi into the Diocese of Lafayette: Father Anthony Bourges, Father Maurice Rousseve, Father Vincent Smith, and Father Francis Wade; and

WHEREAS, initially sent to serve in Alexandria, these African-American priests were assigned to Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church and tasked to serve the 50,000 African-American Catholics in the Diocese of Lafayette at that time laying the original foundation of evangelism, education, collaboration, leadership, and service for the church family; and

WHEREAS, the new church celebrated Holy Mass for the first time on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 23, 1934, with the solemn dedication of the church occurring on February 10, 1935; and

WHEREAS, within five years the Parish was a center of bursting activity having

more than 2,300 parishioners; a house next to the church was renovated to accommodate five Sisters of the Holy Family on August 10, 1944, which Bishop Jeanmard dedicated as a new convent on September 17, 1944 and as a result of the courage, foresight, and activities of the four SVD priests, Immaculate Heart of Mary Church became the first southern parish to have all African-American residents in both the rectory and the convent; and

WHEREAS, through the years, programs sponsored by Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church have included: (1) Faith Formation (CCD classes) for non-Catholic school children seeking to receive any Sacraments; (2) Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RICA(CCD)); for people of all walks of life: those who have never been baptized, baptized in another Christian faith and are interested in becoming a Catholic; people raised in other faiths; people who were baptized Catholic but were not raised Catholic; and people with no religious background at all; (3) Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA - Teens (CCD)) a process by which our youth become Catholic providing education, hospitality, and support as they welcome members to the Catholic faith and church community; (4) Young Adult Ministry (YAM): a group designed for individuals ages 20-45 focusing on their needs, interests and concerns of people in this age group with discussions involving current events, trends, relationship building, professional development, peer mentoring, financial planning, marriage, living single, parenting, and spirituality; (5) Youth Group, ages 10-18; to respond to the social and spiritual needs of youth in our community through fun games, activities, and events that allow them to express their faith through their own words and actions; and

WHEREAS, although it first opened in 1934, the Immaculate Heart of Mary School was forced to close prior to the 2016-2017 school year due to lack of enrollment numbers, financial support, and needed academic performance; and

WHEREAS, continuing with its original mission and educational goals of the Immaculate Heart of Mary School, the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities provided financial resources to operate a Prime Time Head Start program in Lafayette Parish through the school, beginning in April, 2022; and

WHEREAS, this grant, through the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, allowed the school to have a new wing for nearly 200 more students, and provided a much needed new playground, renovations to the gymnasium into another five classrooms,

renovations to its restrooms, repairs to the structure's roof and other general maintenance;
and

WHEREAS, through Prime Time Head Start, the Immaculate Heart of Mary School is a pillar in the Lafayette community promoting school readiness in preschoolers focusing on positive child and family outcomes for bright futures; and

WHEREAS, the Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church has made a profound and positive impact in the African-American community of Lafayette and surrounding areas.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend and congratulate the Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church on the occasion of its Ninetieth Anniversary serving the community of Lafayette and surrounding areas and further acknowledges the contributions, dedication, and guidance of the Immaculate Heart of Mary School to the youth in the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Father Anthony Ataamine Anala, SVD.

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE