

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2019

SENATE RESOLUTION

CELEBRATING THE 175TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF ST. MARY'S  
CHURCH IN WEST WARWICK, RHODE ISLAND

Introduced By: Senators Satchell, and Gallo

Date Introduced: May 01, 2019

Referred To: Recommended for Immediate Consideration

1 WHEREAS, It has been known by several names in its long history, but St. Mary's  
2 Church has been a mainstay in the tiny village of Crompton, in the Town of West Warwick for  
3 the past 175 years; and

4 WHEREAS, By 1844, the Irish settlers of Crompton had grown tired of the ten mile trek  
5 to Providence for Catholic Mass. Mary Doran, the wife of a printer in the Crompton Print Works  
6 purchased an acre of land and donated it to Father Fitton for the purposes of building a church.  
7 The cornerstone for the church was laid on October 15, 1844 and a small church was built upon  
8 it. The Irish of the Pawtuxet Valley finally had a church of their own; and

9 WHEREAS, The church started out as a mission church served by priests from the  
10 Cathedral in Providence. The church became a separate parish and was renamed St. Mary's under  
11 its first Pastor the Rev. Daniel Kelly in 1850. Less than a year later, the Reverend James P.  
12 Gibson came to St. Mary's. Under Father Gibson, the transepts and sanctuary were added in  
13 1856; giving the church its distinctive cross shape. The church's bell tower was added in  
14 1859. Reverend Gibson served until his death in 1892, and is buried adjacent to the church; and

15 WHEREAS, After Father Gibson's death, the church was once again a mission church for  
16 traveling Catholic priests from Providence. On August 6, 1926, the church was devastated by  
17 fire. The church was re-opened on Easter Sunday, 1927. In 1946, the church was returned to  
18 parish status and Rev. Barton Daggett was appointed pastor; and

19 WHEREAS, The church continued to grow spiritually, although the building itself had

1 suffered the ravages of time. In 1978, the church's 133<sup>rd</sup> year, the parish undertook the task of  
2 planning and funding an extensive renovation. Work on the project began in April of 1980. The  
3 structure was lifted and moved while a new foundation was built. After returning the building to  
4 its original location, interior renovations revealed evidence of previous fires. After the  
5 renovation, the building was rededicated on January 25, 1981, by Bishop Louis Gelineau. In  
6 1994, St. Mary's held its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration; and

7           WHEREAS, Today's parishioners are acutely aware of the history of their church. St.  
8 Mary's and the adjacent St. Mary's Cemetery are now entered on the National Register of Historic  
9 Places. From high atop the hill, the church looks over the village of Crompton and the other  
10 villages that would eventually become the Town of West Warwick; and

11           WHEREAS, Most of the original parishioners of Our Lady of Mount Carmel are buried  
12 behind the church. Many of their gravestones indicate their Irish birth places. Among their  
13 graves are the graves of Mary Doran and Father Gibson. There are also the graves of those who  
14 have served our country, and the graves of thousands of other parishioners that have found their  
15 way to this little building on Church Street; now, therefore be it

16           RESOLVED, That this Senate of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations  
17 hereby joins the parishioners of St. Mary's in celebrating the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of their church.  
18 May she continue to serve as the Mother Church of the Pawtuxet Valley and may she continue to  
19 grow with her 18<sup>th</sup> generation of parishioners from this day forth; and be it further

20           RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to  
21 transmit duly certified copies of this resolution to Bishop Thomas J. Tobin, and the Reverend  
22 Douglas J. Spina, Ph.D.

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