

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 244

BY SENATOR JOHNS

A RESOLUTION

To commend the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Roman Catholic Church on its sixtieth anniversary.

WHEREAS, the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Roman Catholic Church (Immaculate Conception) was organized on July 5, 1959, to serve the spiritual needs of the faithful residing in the rapidly growing community of Maplewood, Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, thirty-four families formed the first Christian community of Immaculate Conception and gathered for services in the Maplewood public school auditorium; and

WHEREAS, today, the parish comprises more than six hundred fifty families who worship in a large, modern church that was formally dedicated on January 29, 1984; and

WHEREAS, on November 26, 1950, Reverend Jules B. Jeanmard, Bishop of Lafayette, blessed and dedicated the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, thus becoming the third mission of Our Lady of Prompt Succor Parish; and

WHEREAS, ten acres on Parish Road were purchased from Dr. Charles Fellows and the chapel was moved onto the land which became the parish's permanent home; and

WHEREAS, eventually a larger facility was required to serve the increased Catholic population of Maplewood and the chapel was enlarged and bricked; and

WHEREAS, the first Mass in the renovated building was celebrated by the Reverend Denis Monahan, M.S. on April 5, 1959, and on July 5, 1959, the Most Reverend Maurice Schexnayder blessed the building and announced the formation of Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Roman Catholic Church of Maplewood Parish, whereby Reverend Henry Lenz, M.S. was appointed pastor of the new parish; and

WHEREAS, in its early days, it served about two hundred eighty families who were residents of Maplewood, Hollywood, Magnolia Forest, Beverly Hills, and other residential

subdivisions adjacent to the city of Sulphur; and

WHEREAS, in 1959, the Simon Huval home across the street from the church was purchased and converted into a rectory, and Father Lenz subsequently purchased a building from the Lions Club of Maplewood, moved it to the church property, and developed it into a catechetical center prior to leaving in 1962; and

WHEREAS, Father Lundgren cleared the debt on the rectory and had air conditioning installed before being reassigned in 1967, and in 1968, Father Shahrigan paid off the original debt; and

WHEREAS, the new Immaculate Conception Center was built and blessed on October 28, 1971, parishioners continued to improve and renovate parish facilities, and a new rectory was built and an open house was held on September 26, 1976; and

WHEREAS, shortly after Father Fitzsimmons left, a tragedy sparked the major growth movement that has led to today's impressive physical plant; and

WHEREAS, on August 31, 1981, a major fire burned the church to the ground; and

WHEREAS, the fire raced quickly through the thirty-one year old structure and nothing could be saved despite the heroic efforts of firemen, two of whom averted personal harm when the roof collapsed and came crashing down about twenty feet from them; and

WHEREAS, losses included the irreplaceable pews made of a now extinct type of chestnut wood which had previously been in a church in Hartford, Connecticut; and

WHEREAS, the fire raged for at least three hours as parishioners and friends could only stand by and watch helplessly as the fire was well under way when the fire department arrived; and

WHEREAS, shortly thereafter, the parishioners of Immaculate Conception wiped away their tears, rolled up their sleeves, developed plans to build a new church, and fundraising, along with tithing, produced the revenue required to commence construction; and

WHEREAS, the Most Reverend Jude Speyrer and Father Bernier broke ground for the new church at the site of the old building and the following year, Bishop Speyrer returned to bless the new church and officiate at a combined Mass of Dedication and twenty-fifth anniversary celebration; and

WHEREAS, on the bright Sunday morning of November 6, 1988, the religious community of Immaculate Conception Parish witnessed another memorable fire as Father Brunnert presided over a ritual burning of the mortgage of their brand new church at Maplewood Drive and Shasta; and

WHEREAS, on July 7, 1990, the parish council drafted a list of needs, including additional office space and a multi-purpose building with meeting rooms, recreational facilities, and a larger parish hall; and

WHEREAS, construction of the complex, comprising a youth center and administrative office along with the refurbishment of existing facilities, was accepted on September 15, 1994, and blessed by Bishop Speyrer in October 1995; and

WHEREAS, pastors following Father Vecchio include Msgr. Vincent Sedita, Father Aubrey Guilbeau, Father Gigo George, Father Edward Richard, and current pastor, Father Tim Goodly; and

WHEREAS, throughout its history, thanks to dedicated pastors and hard-working parishioners, Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish has refused to be deterred by hardships and adversity, and signals its intention to serve uninterruptedly as an inspirational and spiritual center of the community for years to come.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend and congratulate the parishioners of Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Roman Catholic Church on the celebration of its sixtieth anniversary and does hereby express best thoughts and prayers for the congregation to remain faithful in the work of the Lord.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Father Tim Goodly.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE