

City of Chicago



R2016-281

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Meeting Date:

Sponsor(s):

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5/18/2016

Sawyer (6)

Resolution

Congratulations extended to St. Dorothy's Roman Catholic Church on 100th anniversary

Committee(s) Assignment:

RESOLUTION COMMEMORATING THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF ST. DOROTHY ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

WHEREAS, On Sunday, June 19, 2016, Chicago Archbishop Blase Cupich will be the main celebrant of a Jubilee Mass in honor of the centennial year of St. Dorothy's Roman Catholic Church, an historic and iconic pillar of the spiritual community in the Chatham-Grand Crossing neighborhood of this city; and

WHEREAS, For the past 100 years, St. Dorothy's Catholic Church has proclaimed its faith on the Southside Chicago in service of the people of Chatham-Grand Crossing; and

WHEREAS, Even as dramatic changes have occurred and ethnic change altered the look of the community, countless families and individuals have found a home and a quality education at St. Dorothy's. Many have moved on in their lives to other environs. Many others have stayed to become part of the fabric of parish life; and

WHEREAS, Regardless of the circumstances, St. Dorothy's has always been there to serve the people, to nourish the faith, to educate the young and to fight against injustice. The history of St. Dorothy's memorializes the story of the endurance, perseveration and salvation of the South Side Catholic community; and

WHEREAS, In 1916, the recently appointed Chicago Archbishop, George William Mundelein, appointed Reverend John Scanlan to organize a new Catholic Parish in the Chatham-Grand Crossing area in Chicago dedicated to Saint Dorothy of Caesarea. Father Scanlon purchased 24 city lots at 78th Street between Vernon and Eberhart, and celebrated the first Mass there on July 16, 1916, held at 811 East 75th Street in a hall leased to the new church; and

WHEREAS, in May of 1917 a combination church & school was completed and first Mass was celebrated on Nov. 18, 1917. The school contained 8 classrooms, with 298 children enrolled, and was staffed by six nuns from the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary from Dubuque Iowa. At first, only two Sunday Masses were held but only half of the parishioners could be accommodated. Soon Fr. Scanlan began saying four masses a weekend, with the help of priests from a nearby Carmelite community; and

WHEREAS, During the turbulent decades between the late 1950s and the majority of the 1960s, St. Dorothy's stood for justice as a rapid racial transition occurred within the parish boundaries. Father Michael Kilbride was pastor during those transition years when Chatham-Grand Crossing became an African-American middle class neighborhood. Due to his diligent groundwork that he and his parishioners laid down, a Chicago Tribune news article at that time noted, "St. Dorothy's is a changing parish, but this is a kind of change that gives a church strength"; and

WHEREAS, By the end of the 1960s, St. Dorothy's began to set a new vision for future social action coming from a strong Christian belief, but not without controversy. Many parishioners had demanded that the then Archbishop and Cardinal John Cody appoint, as St. Dorothy's pastor, the controversial civil rights activist and African American Reverend George Clements (who was already assistant pastor). However the Cardinal chose Reverend Rollins Lambert, the first African American to be ordained in the archdiocese, instead; and

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WHEREAS, Both priests served St. Dorothy's congregation together and evangelized for the cause of African Americans, but in markedly different ways and with radically different styles. However, Father Clements noted that there was nothing but respect between the two priests. After Father Lambert's appointment, they co-celebrated a Unity Mass along with many other African American priests and the Reverend Jesse Jackson in attendance; and

WHEREAS, The priests and parishioners can rightfully be proud of their contributions to civil rights cause. St. Dorothy's parishioners were the first to charter a number of railroad cars to the historic March on Washington, the first to send a busload of men down to Selma, Alabama, the first to organize baskets for poverty-stricken white parishioners, the first to establish African-American history classes, and the first to send a group down to Jackson Mississippi for the 1966 James Meredith March Against Fear; and

WHEREAS, For the last 100 years, St. Dorothy's parish has proudly walked in faithful service to its people and its neighbors, even as dramatic changes have occurred, and ethnic change altered the look of the community; and

WHEREAS, At St. Dorothy's Catholic School, thousands of children received an education second to none. The academic excellence required in classrooms prepared students to become successful business leaders, government officials, professors, journalists, and doctors; and

WHEREAS, In St. Dorothy's 100 years of parish ministries, many were touched with both spiritual and physical food. Today, St. Dorothy's continues to meet the needs of the community through its numerous ministries; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Mayor and members of the City of Chicago City Council, gathered this 18th Day of May, 2016 AD, do hereby commend St. Dorothy's Parish for its unsurpassed contributions to the Chatham-Grand Crossing community, for its sustained efforts to advance the cause of peace and promote spirituality, and for the century of service it has provided to the residents of this city, as well as extend our best wishes for the continued success of its mission on this special occasion of its 100th anniversary; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be prepared and presented to Reverend Robert Miller, pastor of St. Dorothy's Parish, and the Jubilee Committee.

RODERICK T. SAWYER Alderman-6th Ward

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