

CITY OF NEW BEDFORD

IN CITY COUNCIL

November 16, 2017

RESOLUTION HONORING OUR LADY OF PURGATORY PARISH ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR 100TH ANNIVERSARY

WHEREAS, Our Lady of Purgatory Maronite Catholic Parish was founded in 1917, by Monsignor Joseph Shebaya to minister to the spiritual needs of the newly immigrated Maronite Catholics in the City of New Bedford, many of whom left Lebanon looking for a better life and the promise of the American Dream; and

WHEREAS, In June 1918, shortly after Our Lady of Purgatory Maronite Catholic Parish was founded, the Parishioners purchased land on the corner of Pleasant and Franklin Streets in the historic Acushnet Heights section of our City, which remained just a vacant lot of land until 1954, when the current Church was finally built; and

WHEREAS, The Parishioners acquired a little wooden Church, which was dedicated by Bishop Daniel F. Feehan on December 08, 1919, and served as the parish place of worship until it was destroyed in a devastating fire on December 27, 1933, the fire completely destroyed the Church and all that remained were a couple of candlesticks and a statue of St. Maron, which still stands in the current Church today; and

WHEREAS, This traumatic event was followed a few short years later by the untimely death of the Pastor of Our Lady of Purgatory Parish, the Reverend George Jowdy, who tragically died after being swept away by the rising water surge in the Hurricane of 1938, leaving the parish community without a Maronite Catholic Church or a Parish Priest; and

WHEREAS, The Parishioners of Our Lady of Purgatory Church persevered through both these tragedies and finally their faith and dedication were rewarded with the dedication of a new Church on Franklin Street on Mother's Day, May 9, 1954 and the celebrated assignment of Reverend George I. Saad as their new Pastor shortly thereafter on July 14, 1954; and

WHEREAS, This small, yet vibrant parish community tells the true story of the immigrant experience here in our City, a story of family, hard work, devotion, dedication, heartache and success and a strong belief in the American Dream and an unflinching love of God; and

WHEREAS, The Parishioners of Our Lady of Purgatory Church have become integral threads in the fabric of our City's tapestry, having proudly defended the United States of America through their service in the armed forces during World War I, World War II, the Korean Conflict, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War and are continuing to serve in various branches of the military today; contributed to the civic and economic advancement of the City of New Bedford by serving in the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, in various elected and appointed capacities in the City of New Bedford, including on its City Council and its Board of Assessors, and as professionals serving the needs of the greater New Bedford community as lawyers, doctors, and proprietors of many local successful businesses; and

WHEREAS, Over the weekend of September 29, 2017 through October 1, 2017, Our Lady of Purgatory Church celebrated the 100th Anniversary of its founding, with the theme, "We're Celebrating a 100 Year Pilgrimage of Faith and Witness to God's Love", which brought together the parish community and shared with the residents of the City the parish experience with several religions and cultural events showcasing Lebanese foods, traditions and religious services:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the New Bedford City Council hereby joins with the entire Citizenry of the City of New Bedford to thank the Parishioners of Our Lady of Purgatory Parish for their civic, economic, social and cultural contributions to the City of New Bedford and to congratulate and honor the Parish Community on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the founding of Our Lady of Purgatory Church.