



City of Philadelphia

City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Legislation Text

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Honoring and recognizing Old Saint Joseph's Church on the event of its 275th Anniversary.

WHEREAS, On January 1, 2008, the parishioners and friends of Old St. Joseph's Church began a year-long celebration of the 275th Anniversary of the founding of the church; and

WHEREAS, Attracted by the promise of religious freedom in the colony of Pennsylvania, the English Jesuits sent Father Joseph P. Greateon, S.J., to establish the first permanent mission to the Roman Catholics living in and near Philadelphia. In May 1733, Father Greateon purchased a small property off Willings Alley in Philadelphia, built a small chapel there, and began to celebrate the Catholic Mass; and

WHEREAS, Early in 1734, some residents of Philadelphia complained to the Quaker civil authorities that the public celebration of the Mass was contrary to the penal laws of England. Father Greateon answered, "We still are and of right ought to be free and independent of all civil authority retarding, restricting, or debarring our religion. It is not toleration we claim; it is freedom..."; and

WHEREAS, After deliberation, the Quaker authorities decided that the English penal laws did not apply. They upheld William Penn's 1701 *Charter of Privileges for Pennsylvanians*, which guaranteed freedom of religion in Pennsylvania. Thus, Old St. Joseph's, as the church became known, played a significant role in establishing religious freedom in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Free of legal restrictions, the Jesuit mission at Old St. Joseph's flourished. Its parishioners continue to serve the Church and the people of Philadelphia to this day; now, therefore,

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That Old Saint Joseph's Church is hereby honored and recognized on the event of its 275th Anniversary.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Old Saint Joseph's Church as a reflection of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.