



## Legislation Text

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Recognizing the Church of the Gesu located at 18th and Stiles Street in North Philadelphia on the church's 125th Anniversary to be celebrated on Sunday, November 10, 2013.

WHEREAS, The Church was the brainchild of Rev. Burchard Villiger, a Jesuit priest and the first principal of St. Joseph's Preparatory School in 1851; and

WHEREAS, Villiger moved the school to 17th and Stiles Street in 1869, and served as president of the school until 1892. Villager was the founding pastor of the Gesu Parish and the Gesu School which is still located at 1700 W. Thompson Street and is home to over 400 students; and

WHEREAS, The church was designed by Philadelphia architect Edwin Durang, while Fr. Villiger led a tremendous fundraising effort, mostly from the working-class, immigrant parishioners of North Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, The cornerstone of the Church of The Gesu was laid on October 5th, 1879 and was blessed by Archbishop James Wood; and

WHEREAS, The first mass was held in the Church of the Gesu on October 4, 1888 to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Fr. Villiger; and

WHEREAS, The church was dedicated on December 2, 1888, with a mass celebrated by Archbishop Patrick Ryan. It is reported that over 3000 people crammed into the sanctuary and lofts that day to witness the mass; and

WHEREAS, The central nave of the church was at one time the widest unobstructed nave in the country. The ceiling is 100 feet high and 122 feet in diameter. The central nave is 75 feet wide and 252 feet long, and the main altar is 72 feet high; and

WHEREAS, The Church of the Gesu has two 216-ft towers of brick and cement framing the center of the building, and the Doric, Ionic and Tuscan orders of architecture decorate the facade; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby recognize the Church of the Gesu located in North Philadelphia on the church's 125th Anniversary.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the Fr. George Bur, S.J., President of St. Joseph's Preparatory School, as evidence of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.