Also naming the 2000 block of Christian Street "John Van de Paer Way" to honor the life and legacy of Father John Van de Paer.

WHEREAS, Father John Van de Paer was born in Antwerp, Belgium, on November 29, 1920. His parents enrolled him and his brother in Catholic school, where he became interested in the idea of religious life and missionary work. Upon his graduation from high school in 1940, he joined the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, also known as Missionhurst; and

WHEREAS, After ordination on January 26, 1947, Father John was assigned to work in the United States as parochial vicar at Saint Cyprian Church in Columbus, Ohio. In 1952, he was transferred to Saint Charles Borromeo Church in Philadelphia, a largely African American parish, where he served from 1952 through 1995 as parochial vicar and, later, pastor; and

WHEREAS, A natural entrepreneur, Father John knew how to raise money for the church from operating the roller-skating rink, a fleet of church buses, and various parish fundraisers. Those fundraisers helped to fund the youth programs and the grade school, kept the cost of tuition down, and enabled the construction of the parish halls and the remodeling of the gym. These programs not only served the community, but they also provided leadership opportunities for the parishioners. Father John promoted leadership development for all, and under his guidance there was always something going on at Saint Charles to help the community grow and thrive; and

WHEREAS, Father John's impact on South Philadelphia was immense. He served his loyal parishioners for over 40 years and sought to build the church into a social hub for the neighborhood. He stood as father figure to many children who lacked one, and often went to court hearings for young men in the neighborhood who had contact with the criminal justice system. Moreover, he told the teachers at the parish school that they were never to expel Black boys for whom getting kicked out of school might mean entry into the criminal justice system or worse. As one lifelong parishioner observed, "He was Black Lives Matter before Black Lives Matter"; and

WHEREAS, Father John worked to provide opportunities to all children in the neighborhood regardless of whether they were part of his parish. He bought a Greyhound bus and took children - some in parish, others not - on a variety of trips to places such as Florida, Nova Scotia, and the 1967 World's Fair in Montreal; and

WHEREAS, After his official retirement in Philadelphia, Father John left retirement to serve as parochial vicar at Our Lady of Consolation Church in Parkesburg, PA, from 1996 to 2014. Upon leaving Parkesburg, Father Van de Paer resided in Missionhurst's Dominion House in Arlington, VA, for the rest of days; and

WHEREAS, On November 29, 2020, Father John celebrated his 100th birthday, and was later presented with a newly-published book which included a collection of stories of him from former parishioners. All sales from this tribute book were donated to the Equal Justice Initiative, the famed criminal justice reform organization, and have raised more than $15,000; and

WHEREAS, Father John Van de Paer was known as “the People’s Priest” for his dedication and love for his community. He showed others how to be good by his example and built a safe and loving space for his parishioners of South Philadelphia; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the 2000 block of Christian Street also be named Father John Van de Paer Way to honor the life and legacy of Father John Van de Paer.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the family or former parish of Father John Van de Paer further evidencing the sincere admiration and respect of this legislative body.

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