

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1045

By Dunn

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate the Congregation of Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia of Nashville, Tennessee, upon their 150th anniversary.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this legislative body should recognize those venerable religious institutions that, through their unflagging capacity for love, dedication of spirit, and faith in God, strive to enrich the lives of people in their communities; and

WHEREAS, located in Nashville, the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia are one such humble and historic community of faith who will be celebrating their 150th anniversary this year; and

WHEREAS, as devoted daughters of the Catholic Church, the Dominican sisters are faithfully committed to the teachings of Christ, while leading a life of apostolic activity filled with religious spirit and zeal; and

WHEREAS, the Dominican Sisters live a life that calls for a contemplative spirit, and the monastic framework of the sisters' daily life stimulates the growth of their interior life, directing their minds to the things of the Lord and helping them bring a message of grace shaped in the sanctuary, the choir, and the cloister; and

WHEREAS, while the Dominican Order was founded in the thirteenth century by St. Dominic, the Congregation of St. Cecilia began in 1860 as a dream of Nashville's second Catholic bishop, the Right Reverend James Whelan; and

WHEREAS, the bishop, a Dominican himself, wanted sisters to conduct an academy for the higher education of girls and young ladies, guided by deep religious instruction with an emphasis on music and the fine arts; and

WHEREAS, after petitioning the sisters at St. Mary's in Somerset, Ohio, the four founding sisters, Mother Frances Walsh, Sister Columba Dittoe, Sister Lucy Harper, and Sister Philomena McDonough, arrived in Nashville in mid-August of 1860 after a long journey by stagecoach, steamboat, and train; and

WHEREAS, building a new convent (the Motherhouse) located on one of the highest hills in Nashville and just a stone's throw away from the State Capitol building, the original four sisters immediately began the considerable task of establishing the new girls academy; and

WHEREAS, the new academy was named after the third century martyr, St. Cecilia, patroness of music, and rather significantly, it was on the feast of St. Cecilia in the year 1206 that St. Dominic created his first establishment of the Order of Preachers, giving nine women religious the white woolen tunic and black mantle of the Order; and

WHEREAS, meeting every challenge with faith, the four pioneers gracefully mixed the life of the religious with that of an educator, teaching the regular curriculum along with art and music at St. Cecilia Academy, while also acting as prefects for the boarding students, doing the housework, and managing the business affairs of the community; and

WHEREAS, overcoming many obstacles throughout the course of their early history, including the occupation of Nashville by Union forces during the War Between the States, the Battle of Nashville, and the tremendous poverty and devastation the city faced during the Reconstruction Period, all mitigated by the powerful presence of Divine Providence, the apostolate continued to grow and flourish in faith and grace; and

WHEREAS, while the Motherhouse in Nashville was home to all of the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia, early in the twentieth century, the sisters were teaching in schools not only in Nashville, but throughout Tennessee in the cities of Memphis, Jackson, McEwen, Chattanooga, Winchester, and Clarksville; and

WHEREAS, the first half of the twentieth century was marked by several seminal events in the Congregation's history, including receiving formal affiliation with the Dominican Order in 1913, by decree signed by the Master of the Order, Father Hyacinth Maria Cormier; and

WHEREAS, with the community growing in continued blessings, the Dominican sisters purchased one of the most attractive localities and properties in Nashville in 1923; located on

Harding Road, the ninety-two acre tract would figure prominently in the Congregation's future; and

WHEREAS, through many years of hard work and determination, the sisters' dream of opening an elementary school to compliment the already well-established girls academy was finally fulfilled in 1936, when Overbrook School formally began classes on the Harding Road property; and

WHEREAS, in 1957, while the sisters remained at the Motherhouse, St. Cecilia Academy was moved to the Dominican Campus on Harding Road, with Aquinas Junior College officially opening its doors a few years later in 1961; and

WHEREAS, as the Dominican Campus continued to grow, Aquinas Junior College changed its status to a four-year college in 1994; renamed Aquinas College, the four-year school offers a variety of degrees, including nursing degrees, business degrees, liberal arts degrees, and teaching degrees, all tailored by the Dominican philosophy; and

WHEREAS, through two World Wars and the Great Depression, the Dominican sisters of Nashville lived the religious life with simplicity, hospitality, devotion, consistency, and a tangible spirit of sacrifice; expanding in numbers of sisters, they reached thousands of students with the opening of numerous schools throughout the country, enlightening minds and inspiring hearts with knowledge and love of the Truth; and

WHEREAS, having a long, prominent, and distinguished relationship with the State of Tennessee, the Congregation has provided Catholic education to thousands of Tennesseans in the Diocese of Nashville, the Diocese of Knoxville, and the Diocese of Memphis through their private schools and many parish school affiliations; and

WHEREAS, providing Catholic education with a vision of the eternal and supernatural, as well as an appreciation of the temporal and natural, the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia currently have a teaching presence in thirty-four schools located in fourteen states and Australia; and

WHEREAS, the sisters' daily life is filled with the complements of prayer and work, silence and students, laughter and quiet acts of community kindness, all of which creates a well-balanced day devoted to furthering their mission throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, following in the deep musical tradition of St. Cecilia herself, the sisters' love for the Lord rings out in each of their joyous and angelic voices, whether at morning and evening prayers, the celebration of Mass, reciting the rosary, or while singing harmoniously as one body in Christ; and

WHEREAS, manifesting the inner nature of the Christian calling, the consecrated life is at the very heart of the Catholic Church and serves as a decisive element in the mission of the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia; and

WHEREAS, as the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia move forward into the twenty-first century, they also reflect back over the long and illustrious history of their Order, beholding their heritage of truth, commitment, and deep abiding faith; and

WHEREAS, from their prayerful intentions, benevolent hearts, and gracious smiles to the joyous sparkle of their faith in Christ so readily seen in the sisters' eyes, the grace and dedication witnessed in the remarkable lives of the four founding sisters remains an active and viable legacy in the community today; following in the tradition of St. Dominic and St. Cecilia, the sisters continually move deeper into awareness of the presence of the Lord through their personal generosity and fidelity; and

WHEREAS, since their humble beginnings, the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia, following the guidance of the Lord, have faithfully striven to carry out God's work in the world and continue in their mission and Christian endeavors; and

WHEREAS, as a powerful tool in the service of the Kingdom of God, the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia serve as one of the great institutions and catalysts for positive spiritual change in our State and Nation, and the members of this exceptional and historic congregation should be appropriately honored for their exemplary service to their fellow Christians and to the good people of their community; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we join in celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Congregation of the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia of Nashville, Tennessee, thank the good sisters of this historic

congregation for their notable service to the Lord and the State of Tennessee, and wish them every continued success and happiness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.