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House of Representatives

VISCLOSKY HONORS PROTECTION OF THE VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Mr. Speaker: It is with great pleasure that I congratulate Protection of the Virgin Mary Orthodox Church as its congregation joins together in celebration of its 100th Anniversary. The congregation, along with Parish Pastor, Father Peter Bodnar, and Parish Council President, Nick Rozdelsky, celebrated this momentous milestone with a celebratory reception on Sunday, October 2, 2011, at the Saint Elijah Serbian American Hall in Merrillville, Indiana.

Protection of the Virgin Mary Church was originally established in Gary, Indiana, on September 28, 1911, when a group of Slavic, Christian immigrants joined together with the goal of preserving Christian Orthodox religious traditions. At that time, many immigrants moved to Gary in search of employment opportunities created by the growing steel industry. The church services were first held at a rental location in Gary, but a lack of funds led church elder Kondrat Krenitsky to provide a room in his home for services to be held. After some time, members were able to secure a location for the church, and on September 8, 1912, a new church was dedicated and consecrated in Gary, Indiana. The church became widely known as Saint Mary's. The first permanent pastor was Reverend Benjamin Kedrovsky, who held his position until 1957. Saint Mary's continued to grow, and in January 1962, a new church, also located in Gary, was consecrated by His Eminence Archbishop John Garklavs. Nearly four decades later, the church leaders and parishioners built a new church and relocated to its current location in Merrillville, Indiana, where services began in the year 2000.

Other pastors of the parish throughout the years include: Father Sergei Garklavs, Father Peter Rozdelsky, Father John Zabinko, Father Thomas Brown, Father Blagoy Topuzliev, Father William Bass, and current pastor, Father Peter Bodnar.

The parishioners of Saint Mary's Church have always been active and generous in their support of numerous civic endeavors, contributing to projects such as the construction of a Permanent Shrine in San Francisco for the Miraculous Ikon, the Holy Virgin Mary of Kazan, and the Midwest Diocesan Expansion Program.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and my other distinguished colleagues join me in honoring and congratulating Protection of the Virgin Mary Orthodox Church of Merrillville, Indiana, on its 100th Anniversary. Through many hardships, the members of Saint Mary's have dedicated themselves to preserving Christian Orthodox traditions and spiritual beliefs. For their commitment to service, and for touching the lives of countless individuals, they are worthy of the highest praise.