

## SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 216

*Commending the Roman Catholic Diocese of Richmond.*

Agreed to by the Senate, March 5, 2020  
 Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 7, 2020

WHEREAS, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Richmond, one of the oldest Catholic dioceses in the United States, has united and provided spiritual leadership for the Catholic community in central and southern Virginia for 200 years; and

WHEREAS, among the first Catholics to arrive in Virginia were a group of Spanish Jesuits who settled near present-day Williamsburg in the early 1570s; the first organized Catholic communities did not take shape until 1794, however, due to an official prohibition against Catholicism and many other factors; and

WHEREAS, Pope Pius VII formed the Roman Catholic Diocese of Richmond, the seventh diocese in the United States, on July 11, 1820, to unify the Catholic population in central and southern Virginia and help the community thrive; and

WHEREAS, for much of its early history, the parishes of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Richmond were small, geographically isolated, and poor, but advancements in transportation and contributions from diverse immigrant groups led to growth; and

WHEREAS, after the American Civil War, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Richmond welcomed many formerly enslaved people and established new parishes to serve African American communities; the expansion of the federal government and the military during World War I, World War II, and the Cold War also led to an increase in the Catholic population in Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads; and

WHEREAS, while the Roman Catholic Diocese of Arlington was formed from part of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Richmond in 1974, the Richmond diocese still covers a vast area, representing more than 200,000 Catholics in the Richmond area, Hampton Roads, and the Eastern Shore; and

WHEREAS, members of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Richmond have contributed to many different career fields, served the nation in the military, made generous donations of time and treasure to charitable causes, and become recognized leaders in their communities; the success of the diocese is a testament to the power of faith, perseverance, and commitment to improving society; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend the Roman Catholic Diocese of Richmond on the occasion of its 200th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Richmond as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for its legacy of contributions to the Catholic community in Virginia.

ENROLLED

SJ216ER