

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 8

BY SENATOR BOUDREAUX

A RESOLUTION

To commend and congratulate Archbishop Wilton Gregory on being selected by Pope Francis to become a cardinal, the first black prelate in the United States.

WHEREAS, Pope Francis named thirteen new cardinals, including Washington D.C. Archbishop Wilton Gregory, who became the first black United States prelate to earn the coveted red cap in a ceremony held on November 28, 2020; and

WHEREAS, Wilton Gregory was born on December 7, 1947, in Chicago, Illinois, to Ethel and Wilton Gregory and is one of three children; and

WHEREAS, in 1958, he enrolled at St. Carthage Grammar School, where he decided to become a priest even before he converted to Catholicism, was baptized and received his First Communion in 1959, and was confirmed by Bishop Raymond P. Hillinger later that year; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from St. Carthage in 1961, Archbishop Gregory attended Quigley Preparatory Seminary South and Niles College in Chicago, and St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein; and

WHEREAS, at the age of twenty-five, Archbishop Gregory was ordained to the priesthood by John Cardinal Cody on May 9, 1973, engaged in advanced studies at the Pontifical Atheneum of St. Anselm in Rome, and earned a Doctor of Sacred Liturgy degree; and

WHEREAS, he performed pastoral work in Glenview at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, and at Mary, Seat of Wisdom Parish in Park Ridge, Illinois, and also taught at Saint Mary of the Lake Seminary and served as a Master of Ceremonies under Cardinals Cody and Bernardin; and

WHEREAS, on October 31, 1983, he was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago and Titular Bishop of Oliva and received his episcopal consecration on the following December 13 from Cardinal Bernardin, with Bishops Alfred Abramowicz and Nevin Hayes, O.Carm., serving as co-consecrators; and

WHEREAS, on December 29, 1993, Pope John Paul II appointed Archbishop Gregory the seventh Bishop of Belleville, and he was installed on February 10, 1994; and

WHEREAS, from 2001 to 2004, he served as the president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the first African American to head an episcopal conference, and served as vice president from 1998 to 2001; and

WHEREAS, during Archbishop Gregory's presidency, the American bishops issued the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People" in response to Roman Catholic sex abuse cases; and

WHEREAS, in 2002, in recognition of his handling of the sex abuse scandal with repeated apologies and the defrocking of priests, he was chosen as the Person of the Week by *Time Magazine*; and

WHEREAS, in one of his last episcopal appointments before his death, Pope John Paul II named Bishop Gregory the seventh Archbishop of Atlanta on December 9, 2004, and his installation took place on January 17, 2005; and

WHEREAS, Archbishop Gregory has been active in the Roman Catholic Church, advocating for the prevention of child sexual abuse by Roman Catholic religious, implementing policies to protect the faithful from sexual abuse, and has been one of the leading bishops in the United States regarding this endeavor; and

WHEREAS, he authored a bi-weekly column for the Roman Catholic newspaper of the Archdiocese of Atlanta, *The Georgia Bulletin*, entitled "What I Have Seen and Heard", sharing reflections about his faith, work, and experiences; and

WHEREAS, Archbishop Gregory was complimentary of Pope Francis' 2016 apostolic exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, and at a 2017 conference at Boston College, he described it as, "... a document that recognizes the real and serious problems and challenges facing families today, but at the same time it is a proclamation of hope through the mercy and grace of God."; and

WHEREAS, he spoke of Pope Francis as someone who, "challenges the Church and its pastors to move beyond thinking that everything is black and white, so that we sometimes close off the way of grace and growth."; and

WHEREAS, in 2018, a group of Catholics started a petition urging Archbishop Gregory to remove "pro-LGBT" Monsignor Henry Gracz of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Atlanta from his position as a spiritual advisor to victims of sexual abuse for allegedly going against Church teaching; and

WHEREAS, Archbishop Gregory refused, saying, "There are [were] no plans" to remove Gracz from his advisory role and added, "Msgr. Gracz is following the admonition of Pope Francis to accompany people on the periphery of society. His priestly heart is not closed to those who find themselves misunderstood or rejected."; and

WHEREAS, the selection of Archbishop Gregory won praise from LGBTQ advocates in the United States days after Pope Francis voiced support for civil unions for gay couples; and

WHEREAS, the strength of our communities and the overall vitality of American society depends, in great measure, upon the dedication of people like Archbishop Wilton Gregory who unselfishly commit of themselves to unify, coordinate, encourage, promote, and carry on Catholic activities in the United States, organize and conduct religious, charitable, and social welfare work at home and abroad, aid in education, and care for immigrants.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby commend Archbishop Wilton Gregory on being selected by Pope Francis to become a cardinal, the first black prelate in the United States.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to Archbishop Wilton Gregory.

---

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE