

By: LaMantia

S.R. No. 413

R E S O L U T I O N

1           WHEREAS, Supporters of Incarnate Word Academy in Brownsville  
2 are gathering on June 3, 2023, to celebrate a legacy of service that  
3 has spanned 170 years; and

4           WHEREAS, One of the first schools in the Rio Grande Valley,  
5 the academy was founded by four sisters of the Incarnate Word and  
6 Blessed Sacrament; they traveled to Brownsville from Lyon, France,  
7 at the behest of the first Catholic bishop of Texas, the Most  
8 Reverend Jean M. Odin; the French-speaking sisters, Claire  
9 Valentine, Ange Barré, Ephrem Satin, and Dominique Ravier, spent a  
10 few months in Galveston learning English and Spanish before  
11 proceeding to their new home; in order to provide textbooks to their  
12 pupils, they purchased a used printing press; and

13           WHEREAS, The school rented a small, four-room frame house  
14 before moving to Fronton Street at the end of 1853; students hailed  
15 from Brownsville, other cities in the Rio Grande Valley, and  
16 Matamoros, Mexico; the sisters faced many challenges, from yellow  
17 fever epidemics to bandit raids; in 1867, a hurricane all but  
18 demolished the building, and the school was nearly forced to close,  
19 but the local community and Bishop Claude Dubois came together to  
20 raise funds for a new convent and school, built on East Saint  
21 Charles Street; and

22           WHEREAS, By 1885, high school instruction became available at  
23 Incarnate Word; the new Villa Maria High School was completed on  
24 Jefferson Street in 1926; growth continued in subsequent decades,

1 and in the 1960s, elementary instruction moved to buildings on  
2 Resaca Boulevard, purchased from the former Harlingen Air Force  
3 Base and renovated; a new high school was built on the Resaca campus  
4 in 1971, while the junior high transferred to the old Villa Maria  
5 facility; and

6         WHEREAS, Villa Maria High School closed in the early 1990s;  
7 Incarnate Word Academy then served elementary and middle school  
8 students at the Villa Maria campus, while the old IWA barracks  
9 became home to the new Villa Maria Language Institute; in order to  
10 invest in much-needed updates and improvements, the sisters sold  
11 much of their property to the neighboring hospital; and

12         WHEREAS, The new century has brought many changes to the  
13 education landscape, and Incarnate Word Academy is set to close at  
14 the end of the 2022-2023 school year; while marking the end of an  
15 era, members of its community may reflect on the important role the  
16 school has played in the Rio Grande Valley and celebrate the  
17 unyielding faith and dedication of the sisters who provided  
18 generations of young Texans with a strong foundation on which to  
19 build their lives; now, therefore, be it

20         RESOLVED, That the Senate of the 88th Texas Legislature  
21 hereby honor the legacy of Incarnate Word Academy in Brownsville  
22 and recognize all who those who have contributed to this historic  
23 institution.