

2021-K243

Assembly Resolution No. 243

BY: M. of A. Giglio JM

MOURNING the death of Dr. Dennis R. DePerro, 21st President of St. Bonaventure University, beloved family man and distinguished educator

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to pay tribute to citizens of the State of New York whose lifework and civic endeavor served to enhance the quality of life in their communities and the great State of New York; and

WHEREAS, There are certain outstanding members of the community who, through their commitment and dedication, have served to improve the quality of higher education, and have had a measurable positive impact on the lives of countless students, faculty and staff, and alumni, as well as the community-at-large; Dennis R. DePerro was one such individual; and

WHEREAS, It is with great sorrow and deep regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Dennis R. DePerro, noting the significance of his purposeful life and accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Dennis R. DePerro of Syracuse, New York, died on Monday, March 1, 2021, at the age of 62, due to complications related to the novel coronavirus; and

WHEREAS, Born on February 18, 1959, Dennis R. DePerro was the son of Jennie and Peter DePerro; he graduated from Bishop Timon High School in Buffalo, New York, and went on to earn his bachelor's and master's degrees at Canisius College before receiving a doctoral degree from the University of Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, Prior to his appointment at St. Bonaventure, Dr. Dennis R. DePerro served as vice president for enrollment management at Le Moyne College in Syracuse for 18 years before becoming the inaugural dean of the School of Graduate and Professional Studies in 2013; he also served as a professor of management in the Madden School of Business; finally, he was selected as the 21st President of St. Bonaventure University in late 2016, beginning his tenure there on June 1, 2017; and

WHEREAS, The accomplishments of Dennis R. DePerro during his tenure as President of St. Bonaventure are numerous and notable; under his able leadership, the new School of Health Professions was created as a result of gifts received through the "A Bolder Bonaventure" capital campaign; new enrollment and marketing strategies led to online graduate enrollment growth, as well as the three largest incoming freshman classes in the last 11 years; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, his presidential commissions examined critical issues on campus and led to the hiring of a vice president for mission integration in 2019, and in 2020, the Presidential Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion was reinstituted to improve efforts across campus; and

WHEREAS, In further service to higher education, this impressive man served on numerous advisory boards and associations, including the Council of Independent Colleges and Universities, the College Board, National Catholic College Admission Association, New York State Association of College Admission Counseling, and President's Council of the Atlantic 10 Athletic Conference; and

WHEREAS, Dennis R. DePerro's journey to become President of St. Bonaventure is an extraordinary story of a respectful individual from humble beginnings; as a young man, he dreamt of studying at the university but chose another school because of scholarship opportunities; he remained faithful to his roots throughout his illustrious career and made his dreams come true, always dedicated to family, faith and making the world a better place; and

WHEREAS, A man of many interests, Dennis R. DePerro embraced his

mother's love of cooking and shared his culinary skills when entertaining friends and family; he was a gifted pianist and organist who played at churches throughout Buffalo; he loved spending time with his family, especially boating and travelling whenever possible, and would make every effort to arrange one-day getaways, often in conjunction with his duties for the university; and

WHEREAS, During a virtual memorial mass, held on Saturday, April 17, 2021, students and alumni say Dr. Dennis R. DePerro led with a big heart, a soft touch and a clear vision for the university; this knowledgeable man also had a firm grasp and clear vision of what every division at the university was and should be doing; and

WHEREAS, Father Dan Riley, O.F.M., of the university's mountaintop retreat house, recited in his homily regarding the beloved Dennis R. DePerro, "And I think the challenge now is that we define the legacy for us: Have we done our work? Do we just go back to things prior to him? Do we resume what he did? Do we do what I think he would want us to do, which I think he would long for us to do, because I think he was a humble man and he would say, keep going"; and

WHEREAS, Dennis R. DePerro is survived by his beloved wife, Sherry; two sons, Andrew and Matthew; two brothers, Peter and Richard; a sister, Rose; and several nieces and nephews; as well as numerous friends and colleagues who will long cherish his memory; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Dennis R. DePerro leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all he served and befriended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Dr. Dennis R. DePerro, and to express its deepest condolences to his family; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Dr. Dennis R. DePerro.