

RESOLUTION 171
Sister Mary Antona Ebo

WHEREAS, Elizabeth Louise Ebo, also known as Betty, was born April 10, 1924, in Bloomington, Ill., one of three children born to Daniel and Louise (Teal) Ebo; and after her mother died and her father lost his job and their home, Betty and her older brother and sister were placed in the McLean County Home for Colored Children in Bloomington, where she lived from 1930 - 1942; and

WHEREAS, Betty Ebo was baptized Catholic on December 19, 1942 and as such she was determined to attend a Catholic nursing school. She faced numerous rejections because of race. She learned of St. Mary's Infirmary School of Nursing in St. Louis, run by the Sisters of St. Mary, and she enrolled there in 1944. On July 26, 1946, she became one of the first three African- American women to enter the Sisters of St. Mary. She received the name Sister Mary Antona, and she professed final vows on Feb. 11, 1954; and

WHEREAS, Sister Antona earned a master's degree in hospital executive development from St. Louis University and also earned a master's in theology of health care through Aquinas Institute of Theology. She was certified as a chaplain through the National Association of Catholic Chaplains. Sister Antona served in various positions at various Hospitals throughout her career. She was the first African-American woman to administer a hospital in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Sister Antona was awarded six honorary doctorates: Doctor of Humane Letters from Loyola University of Chicago (1995); Doctor of Humane Letters from the College of New Rochelle, N.Y. (2008); Doctor of Humane Letters from Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis (2009); Doctor of Humanities from St. Louis University (2010); Doctor of Humane Letters from the University of Missouri-St. Louis (2010); and Doctor of Laws from the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind. (2013); and

WHEREAS, on March 10, 1965 Sister Antona flew to Selma, Alabama to take part in the march following the Infamous Bloody Sunday. In 2007, a PBS documentary chronicling the events and prominently featuring Sister Antona was produced: "Sisters of Selma: Bearing Witness for Change." In the time since 1965, Sister Antona had often been asked to speak on civil rights; and

WHEREAS, Sister Antona was elected to the congregational leadership at the Franciscan Sisters of Mary. She served as a member of the St. Louis Archdiocesan Human Rights Commission and a member of the Missouri Catholic Conference on Social Concerns. She was pastoral associate at her parish, St. Nicholas Church in St. Louis. She also served on the Board of Directors for Cardinal Ritter Institute and was a founding member of the National Black Sisters' Conference serving as its president. In 1989, the conference awarded her the Harriet Tubman Award for being "called to be a Moses to the people;" and

WHEREAS, in addition to her honorary doctorates, Sister Antona received many awards and recognitions for her courage and her insight on civil rights issues. Of special note, she received communion from Pope John Paul II and gave President Barack Obama a hug after she offered an invocation at a dinner honoring him. A seminar room at the Cardinal Rigali Center in St. Louis is named in her honor. She was featured prominently in the "Voices of Civil Rights" exhibit at the Library of Congress in 2005; despite age and frailty she continued to speak on her experiences on national and international levels well into her 90s, challenging listeners to live out the truth that all God's creatures are equal in the eyes and heart of God; and

WHEREAS, on Saturday, November 11, 2017, Sister Mary Antona Ebo, passed away at the age of 93. Sister Antona is survived by her sister-in-law, Maxine Ebo of Rancho Cordova, California. Archbishop Robert J. Carlson issued a statement on the death of Sister Antona. "We will miss her living example of working for justice in the context of our Catholic faith. I ask that the faithful of the Archdiocese of St. Louis join me in praying for the repose of the soul of Sister Ebo..."

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Members of this Honorable Board of Aldermen pause in our deliberations to join the sponsors of this resolution in expressing their deepest heartfelt sympathy upon the passing of Sister Mary Antona Ebo and we direct the Clerk of this Honorable Board of Aldermen to prepare a properly inscribed copy of this resolution to be presented to her family at a time and place deemed appropriate by the sponsors.

Introduced on this 20th day November, 2017 by:

The Honorable Sharon Tyus, Alderwoman 1st Ward
The Honorable Terry Kennedy, Alderman 18th Ward
The Honorable Lewis E. Reed, President of the Board of Aldermen

Adopted this 20th day of November as attested by:

Donna Elliott
Clerk, Board of Aldermen

Lewis E. Reed
President, Board of Aldermen