

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 4861



Introduced by: **REP. SALVADOR A. PLEYTO, SR.**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Minor Basilica of La Purisima Concepcion, locally known as Santa Maria Church is a Roman Catholic Church located in the municipality of Santa Maria, in the province of Bulacan. It is under the coat of arms and jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Malolos and Seat of the Episcopal Vicar of the Eastern District of the Diocese of Malolos.

Founded by the Franciscan missionaries in 1792, the parish is one of the unique Marian centers of the diocese. It is home to an image of the Virgin Mary that is believed to be miraculous. There are two local legends as to how the image arrived in Santa Maria; first is that it was brought to the town by the Franciscan Friars, second is that it was sculpted out of wood from a galleon.

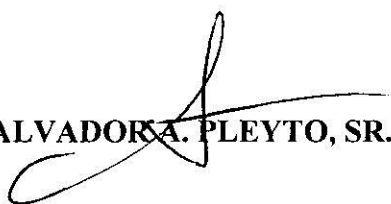
The image has been stolen in the 1930s and was retrieved in Nueva Ecija by a man named Teofilo Ramirez who claimed that the Virgin Mary appeared in his dream and gave instructions as to where the image can be found. The image was returned to the town on a February and the townsfolk accordingly adjusted their feast day to the first Thursday of February except when it falls on February 2 which is the Feast of the Our Lady of the Candles.

The image was first granted an episcopal coronation on March 3, 2018 by Bishop Jose Oliveros of Malolos. On March 28, 2019, Pope Francis granted the canonical coronation of the image of La Purisima Concepcion. The coronation took place on February 1, 2020.

On March 21, 2021, Pope Francis declared that the La Purisima Conception Church will be elevated into a Minor Basilica. And on November 27, 2021, the church was formally enshrined as a Minor Basilica which was headed by Charles Brown, the apostolic nuncio to the Philippines.

This bill seeks to declare the Minor Basilica of La Purisima Concepcion Church as a pilgrimage site and tourist destination, mandating the Department of Tourism and its attached agencies, and the Department of Public Works and Highways in consultation and coordination with the local government of Santa Maria, to come up with a comprehensive development plan for the improvement, maintenance and preservation of the church, all areas attached to it, including all roads leading to and from it.

In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


SALVADOR A. PLEYTO, SR.

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AN ACT DECLARING THE LA PURISIMA CONCEPCION CHURCH IN SANTA MARIA, BULACAN, A PILGRIMAGE SITE AND TOURIST DESTINATION, PROVIDING FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. The La Purisima Concepcion Church located in the Municipality of Santa Maria, Province of Bulacan is hereby declared a pilgrimage site and a tourist destination. As such, its development shall be prioritized by the Department of Tourism (DOT) and other concerned agencies, subject to the rules and regulations governing the development of pilgrimage sites and tourist destinations.

SEC. 2. Within one (1) year after the approval of this Act, the DOT, in coordination with the DPWH and other concerned agencies of the government shall prepare a tourism development plan involving the construction, rehabilitation, installation and maintenance of facilities and infrastructure that shall improve and conserve the overall feature of the area;

SEC. 3. The DOT and its concerned agencies shall take immediate steps to implement the tourism development plan that will suit the needs of the La Purisima Concepcion Church, and the same shall be incorporated in the National Tourism Development Plan.

SEC. 4. The Secretary of the DOT shall include in the Department's program the implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act and from internally-generated funds of the DOT.

SEC. 5. Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOT, in consultation with the local government unit of Santa Maria, shall promulgate rules and regulations for the proper implementation of this Act.

SEC. 6. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in any newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,