



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **2979**



Introduced by Representatives Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, Yedda Marie K. Romualdez, Andrew Julian K. Romualdez and Jude A. Acidre

AN ACT
DECLARING THE METROPOLITAN CATHEDRAL OF OUR LORD'S
TRANSFIGURATION IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF PALO, PROVINCE OF
LEYTE, AS A PROTECTED CULTURAL HERITAGE SITE, PROVIDING
FOR ITS PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT, AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Metropolitan Cathedral of Our Lord's Transfiguration, also known as the Palo Metropolitan Cathedral or Palo Cathedral, is a church built in 1956 by the Jesuits, then subsequently administered by Augustinians, and later by the Franciscans. It is not only a religious landmark but also a significant historical edifice – during the World War II, it served as a hospital for the wounded; during the Super Typhoon Yolanda, while it was heavily damaged, it still became the refuge of several survivors and the last resting place of those who perished; in 2015, Pope Francis visited the cathedral after its repairs and rehabilitations; and, also in 2015, it was declared as one of the pilgrim churches of the archdiocese by Archbishop John F. Du.

To this day, the Palo Cathedral continues to provide a wide range of liturgical services to its congregation, from blessing of sacramentals, administering the

Sacrament of Reconciliation, to celebrating the Mass. In keeping with its commitment to serving the faithful, the Cathedral has also embraced modern technology by extending its services online. Notably, it now offers live-streamed Masses in English, which are accessible to a global audience through its official Facebook page. This initiative ensures that individuals, regardless of location, can participate in the sacred rituals and experience the spiritual guidance provided by the Cathedral.

Additionally, the Cathedral holds a significant place in the religious life of the Philippines. It has been officially designated as one of the Jubilee Churches for the Jubilee Year 2025, a designation granted by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). As a pilgrimage site for the Jubilee Year, the Cathedral will play a central role in the celebrations surrounding this special year, which carries the theme "Pilgrims of Hope." The Jubilee Year 2025 is a time for spiritual renewal, reflection, and deeper connection with the universal Church. Through its selection as a pilgrimage site, the Palo Cathedral invites the faithful to embark on a journey of faith, hope, and renewal.

In order to preserve not only the infrastructure but also the history the Cathedral carries and embodies, this bill seeks to declare the Palo Cathedral as a protected cultural heritage site and mandates the Department of Tourism, in cooperation with other concerned agencies, to develop and implement a tourism development plan.

This measure was also filed during the 19th Congress and was primarily referred to the Committee on Basic Education and Culture.

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



FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ



YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ



ANDREW JULIAN K. ROMUALDEZ



JUDE A. ACIDRE



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

Section 1. *Palo Cathedral as a Protected Cultural Heritage Site.* – The Metropolitan Cathedral of Our Lord's Transfiguration, also known as the Palo Metropolitan Cathedral or Palo Cathedral, is hereby declared a protected cultural heritage site. 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.

Section 2. *Tourism Development Plan.* – Within one (1) year after the approval of this Act, the DOT, in coordination with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and other concerned agencies of the government, shall prepare a tourism development plan involving the construction, installation, and maintenance of such appropriate facilities and infrastructure that shall improve the overall feature of the area, thereby ensuring the accessibility and security of pilgrims and tourists; *Provided*, That the said development plan shall ensure the preservation and conservation of the historic significance of the area.

The DOT and its concerned attached agencies shall take immediate steps to implement the tourism development plan that will suit the needs of the Palo Cathedral, and shall incorporate the same in the National Tourism Development Plan.

Section 3. *Appropriations.* – 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.

Section 4. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DOT, in consultation with the local government unit of Palo, Leyte, shall promulgate rules and regulations for the proper implementation of this Act.

Section 5. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in any newspaper of general

circulation.

Approved,