

of this act; and the said corporations or trustees shall also, by their said respective names or titles, receive all debts due, or that shall become due, to the said church or congregation, and sue for and recover the same in any court of law or equity in this state, in the name and for the use of the said church, society or congregation, to which they respectively belong, as trustees or a body politic or corporate.

And, whereas the declaration of rights prohibits every religious sect, order or denomination of christians, as such, from receiving any sale, gift or devise of lands, goods or chattels, except not more than two acres of land for a church, meeting-house, or other house of worship, and for a burying-ground, without the leave of the legislature; Be it enacted, That every body politic or corporate aforesaid, and their successors, or the major part of them, by their respective names or titles, shall be able and capable in law to purchase, hold, possess and enjoy, in fee-simple, or for any other less estate or estates, any lands, tenements, rents, annuities, or other hereditaments, within this state, by the gift, grant, bargain, sale, alienation, enfeoffment or confirmation, of any person or persons, bodies politic or corporate, capable in law to make the same, provided the same be made by indenture duly acknowledged and recorded according to law, and such lands, tenements, rents, annuities, or other hereditaments, or any less estates, rights or interests, of or in the same, to grant, alien, sell or transfer; and also that every the said corporation or body politic, and their successors, or the major part of them, severally by their said respective names or titles, may take and receive any sum or sums of money, any kind, manner or portion, of goods and chattels, that shall be sold, given or bequeathed to them as aforesaid, by any person or persons, bodies politic or corporate, capable in law to make a gift, sale or bequest thereof, and employ the same for the benefit and use of the particular church, society or congregation, whereunto they respectively belong as a body politic or corporate; provided always, that the said bequests be not made in the last sickness of the testator; and provided also, that the clear yearly value of messuages, houses, lands, tenements, rents, annuities, and other hereditaments, interests, property and estate, real and personal, of what nature or kind soever, of any particular corporation whatever, or their successors, shall not exceed the sum of one thousand pounds current money, and all gifts, grants and bequests, made to any body politic or corporate aforesaid, or their successors, after the clear yearly value of their estates, real and personal, of what nature or kind soever, shall amount to the said sum of one thousand pounds current money, and all bargains and purchases to be made by any trustees or corporation aforesaid, or their successors, which may increase the yearly value of the said estate above or beyond the standard aforesaid, shall be absolutely void and of none effect; and provided also, that no corporation or body politic aforesaid, or their successors, shall grant, alien, sell or transfer, such lands, tenements, annuities, or transfer such lands, tenements, annuities, or other hereditaments, or any less estates, rights or interests, in the same, or dispose of any kind, manner or portion, of goods or chattels, or any sum or sums of money above twenty pounds current money, or sell, alien or transfer, any church, chapel, meeting-house, or other house of worship, or burying-ground, or apply to the legislature for leave to sell, alien, or transfer the same, unless thereunto authorised by a majority of the votes of the church, society or congregation, whereunto they respectively belong as a body politic or corporate; and in case any body politic or corporate, or their successors, or any of them, shall act contrary to the provisions herein expressed, then, and in every such case, such sales, gifts or grants, shall be null and void, and each and every member who shall have concurred in offending as aforesaid, shall be for ever thereafter incapable of executing the trusts created by this act; and the said church, society or congregation, to which the said trustees or body politic so offending did belong, shall and may proceed, at their discretion, to appoint and choose, as herein before directed, a sufficient number of persons qualified as aforesaid to act as trustees, or a body politic or corporate, for and on behalf of the said church, society or corporation.

And, whereas it has been represented to this general assembly, that certain property, real, personal and mixed, or the rents and profits thereof, have been heretofore applied to the use, support and maintenance, of the ministers of the Roman catholic religion, although the said property hath been held and possessed by certain individuals as the legal proprietors thereof, but under a confidential or implied trust, that the said property, and the rents and profits thereof, should be faithfully applied to the use, support or maintenance, of the ministers of the Roman catholic religion: And whereas, by the declaration of rights, all gifts, sales or devises, for the support, use or benefit, of any minister or preacher of the gospel as such, or of any religious sect or denomination, without the leave of the legislature, are declared to be void: And whereas it is highly reasonable and just to grant unto the ministers of the Roman catholic religion, who are citizens of this state, that legislative aid without which they will be destitute of that protection and security to their property to which they are entitled equally with every other sect or denomination of christians; Be it enacted, That every legal proprietor or possessor of any property, real, personal or mixed, held and possessed by him, on or before the fourteenth day of August, seventeen hundred and seventy-six, under a confidential trust, that the same, or the rents or profits thereof, should be applied to the use, support or maintenance, of the ministers of the Roman catholic religion, and every legal proprietor or possessor of any property, real, personal or mixed, acquired since the said fourteenth day of August, seventeen hundred and seventy-six, by exchange for property held under a confidential trust as aforesaid, before the said fourteenth day of August, seventeen hundred and seventy-six, or purchased with money or other valuable consideration held by such proprietor or possessor in confidential trust as aforesaid, or arising from the rents, issues and profits, of such property, acquired before the period aforesaid, may have full power and authority, at any time hereafter, to execute an instrument of writing, declaring the purposes for which the said property hath been or is held by him, or he may, by deed or otherwise, convey