

Dear President Obama:

I write in favor of your bestowing the Presidential Medal of Freedom on Fred Ross, Sr.

I know of his work through the large number of colleagues and supporters here in the Diocese of Oakland for years. Our seminary days brought us in touch with the indignity of the bracero practice. Four young priests from what was then the Archdiocese of San Francisco carried on a ministry with the migrant workers and were the conduits of information on the injustice and suffering of migrant workers.

Through the years, these priests became help and encouragement for Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta and the efforts of the United Farm Workers. Many here in the diocese especially from the 1960s onward developed interest and action for aid to the marches that took place, the need for accommodations and participation in the grape boycott. Some of the priestly leaders were Father Oliver Lynch OFM, the pastor of St. Elizabeth's Church in **Oakland**, Father Alan McCoy, OFM, the provincial here in **California**, Father William O'Donnell, later the pastor of St. Joseph the Worker Church in Berkeley, among others.

Fred Ross was close to all of these. His genius perhaps was to organize and open avenues of support for those who sensed the need of correction of the labor situation. It was Fred who with steady hand and unflappable demeanor promoted movement without violence, with perseverance and with extraordinary yet humble focus.

His service to the cause and promotion of human dignity should be honored.

Sincerely,

John S. Cummins
Bishop Emeritus of Oakland