



**MOST REVEREND RICHARD J. GARCIA, D.D.**  
*Bishop of the Diocese of Monterey*

(831) 373-4345  
FAX: (831) 373-1175

RJGB@dioceseofmonterey.org  
www.dioceseofmonterey.org

March 20, 2013

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

RE: Conferral of the Presidential Medal of Freedom on Fred Ross Sr.

Dear President Obama,

I write to add my voice in support of the nomination of Fred Ross Sr. for the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Mr. Ross's work with Dust Bowl refugees, Japanese Americans, Mexican and African Americans and farm workers, reveal a man of deep moral conviction. He was also a skilled organizer who invited communities to be their best selves as they fought for basic human, economic and social justice. He fought for racial equality, decried discrimination and bigotry, and believed in the sanctity of all people. He lived the Catholic social teaching that the economy must be in function of people, as opposed to people being in function of the economy (*1986 Justice for All, US Bishops' Pastoral Letter on the Economy*) and demonstrated the power and indispensability of collective action through union organizing as a means to achieve a balanced and just work environment. His actions built solidarity within communities and across communities.

I witnessed the fruits of his labor directly, as a young Deacon at Sacred Heart Parish at the height of the farm workers' struggle for recognition and basic dignity and was privileged to accompany farm workers and their families in that struggle.

I knew Mr. Fred Ross Sr. for many years as we were involved in various struggles especially working in support of the United Farm workers Union and Mr. Cesar Chavez. I consider him both a friend and a person I admire greatly for his strength and leadership.

It is my understanding that Fred Ross Sr. never sought or expected any public recognition for his work. Yet I believe it is a precious opportunity to lift up the lives of those who in times of moral crisis refuse to be silent or complacent and instead, stand for social justice, even at personal risk. Their witness is the leaven that raises our spirits and gives us the courage to do no less in these times.

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
March 20, 2013  
Page 2

I encourage you to bestow the well deserved honor of the Presidential Medal of Freedom  
on Fred Ross Sr.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard J. Garcia", with a small cross symbol to the left of the first name.

Most Reverend Richard J. Garcia, D.D.  
Bishop of the Diocese of Monterey