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House of Representatives

A TRIBUTE TO MONSIGNOR JOHN MORETTA ON THE OCCASION OF HIS 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF ORDINATION INTO THE PRIESTHOOD AND HIS 25TH ANNIVERSARY AS PASTOR OF RESURRECTION CHURCH IN BOYLE HEIGHTS

HON. LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD
OF CALIFORNIA

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an extraordinary spiritual and civic leader in the Boyle Heights community in the heart of my congressional district.

This year, Monsignor John Moretta is celebrating two significant milestones. It is the 40th anniversary of his ordination into the priesthood and his 25th anniversary serving as the immensely respected and beloved pastor of Resurrection Church in Boyle Heights.

It is my pleasure to tell you more about this remarkable man.

A native Angelino, Monsignor Moretta entered St. John's Seminary, Camarillo, in 1960. After completing Philosophy and Theology studies, he was ordained on April 27, 1968. Since then, he has served in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles as a parish priest in five parishes, the most recent being Resurrection Church. In addition to being an elected member of the Council of Priests, the Monsignor received special recognition within the church on February 2, 1992 when he was invested as a Domestic Prelate to His Holiness with the title of Monsignor.

During Monsignor Moretta's ministry, he has worked primarily in the Spanish-speaking Latino immigrant community. While he provides motivational spiritual guidance to his congregation, Monsignor Moretta is also highly regarded for his extensive community work that extends well beyond the walls of Resurrection Church.

Under his leadership, Resurrection Church offers a broad array of initiatives to improve the lives of families in the community.

Among the many examples of his outreach, Monsignor Moretta empowers his parishioners to learn English and become U.S. citizens.

Monsignor Moretta also encourages residents to speak out against crime and pollution in their neighborhoods. For over nine years, as part of the Resurrection Church Neighborhood Watch group, Monsignor Moretta has met with members of the community every week to discuss public safety.

In an effort to address the neighborhood's concerns about crime and gang activity, Monsignor Moretta took the lead in bringing the successful Project CLEAR anti-gang program to Boyle Heights.

I remember well when Monsignor Moretta first approached me about obtaining the federal funding needed to start and maintain the program. Monsignor Moretta explained that he was very concerned about our community because he was increasingly attending funeral services for those killed in gang-related violence, including the funerals of innocent bystanders caught in the line of fire.

Today, through intelligence-gathering, visible community patrols, gang-related arrests, and the investigation of gang-related crimes, the officers in the CLEAR Unit are credited with reducing crime in the area. The officers also work closely with school officials to reduce gang activity and local gang-intervention organizations to divert "at-risk" youth from gang involvement.

Monsignor Moretta has also led efforts to protect our children and families from a number of projects that raised significant health and safety concerns in the community.

Under his guidance, the Mothers of East Los Angeles (MELA) was formed in the 1980s to bring the community together to protest the building of a state prison. As part of this effort, Monsignor Moretta led 200 Latina mothers on a lobbying mission to Sacramento where they successfully voiced their concerns about the proposed prison with the governor and state legislators.

Ever since then, on behalf of the community's ongoing quest for social and environmental justice, Monsignor Moretta, in coordination with MELA and other local leaders, has worked to ward off other harmful projects. They have been at the forefront of efforts to stop the expansion of a plant that recycles petroleum and battery acids. They joined forces to oppose the siting of a toxic incinerator. And, most recently, they have been organizing to protest the proposed construction of a power plant that will increase toxic emissions in the area.

In addition to environmental causes, Monsignor Moretta and the Mothers of East Los Angeles have joined forces to bring stability and pride to neighborhoods through homeownership. They worked together to make low-income housing units available to area families. They also established the Boyle Heights Resident Homeowners Association and the Mothers of East Los Angeles Home Ownership Center to provide information and resources to help families become first-time homeowners.

Madam Speaker, on the occasions of Monsignor Moretta's 40th Anniversary of ordination and his 25th Anniversary as pastor of Resurrection Church, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Monsignor Moretta—or Father John as the community lovingly refers to him—on both of these significant anniversaries and, above all, in thanking him for his tireless advocacy on behalf of the Boyle Heights community.