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## House of Representatives

### A TRIBUTE RECOGNIZING THE 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF ST. MARCELLINUS CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE CITY OF COMMERCE IN THE 34<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

HON. LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD of CALIFORNIA

Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the only Catholic church in the City of Commerce in the 34<sup>th</sup> Congressional District.

On August 10, 1958, the church's founding stone was placed on the spot that would become St. Marcellinus Church at 2349 Strong Avenue. Eight months later, the church's official open house took place on the feast of St. Marcellinus, the church's patron, on April 26, 1959.

Today, more than 600 people are registered parishioners of the church, and hundreds more attend mass on a regular basis. The church's services – held in both English and Spanish – continue to draw generations of Commerce families together in this industrial community of about 13,500 residents.

Parish Life Director Humberto Ramos was appointed to lead the congregation in August following the retirement of Father Jules Mayer after more than 21 years of service. Minister Ramos said the church serves many purposes in the community that extends well beyond religion. "Everybody knows each other in this community. This is their church. People need to have a sense of belonging."

To celebrate the church's important milestone, Cardinal Roger Mahoney will preside over its Golden Jubilee Mass on June 22 and recognize some of the church's founding members.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me along with Cardinal Mahoney and the parishioners of St. Marcellinus Church in celebrating the parish's 50 wonderful years of service to its members and the community.

I would also like to submit for the record excerpts from a June 29, 2007 article that appeared in *The Tidings*, the weekly newspaper of the Los Angeles Archdiocese, that provides a detailed overview of the creation of St. Marcellinus Church. As the article points out, the church's founders are especially to be commended for their commitment and fortitude in creating this place of worship that today stands as the spiritual centerpiece of the Commerce community.

### St. Marcellinus Church: A History

By Hermine Lees, *The Tidings*

"... Before 1957, the idea of a local Catholic church serving this industry-heavy community southeast of downtown L.A. was only a dream for its residents, and fulfilled only after some 14 years of praying and planning. By then, residents of the communities of Bandini and Rosewood Park were hemmed in by the creation of the Santa Ana Freeway, rail yards and industry that separated them from St. Alphonsus Church.

Father Patrick O'Dowd, St. Alphonsus pastor, attempted to solve the problem by purchasing a parcel of land at the corner of Atlantic and Panocha, planning for a chapel in the area. But the Korean War and freeways intervened.

Only through the efforts of two local residents, Alex Perez and Ben Garcia, was a Catholic committee formed in 1954 to survey the area, raise funds and communicate their plan for a church to Cardinal James Francis McIntyre. By early 1957 their hard work was rewarded when Auxiliary Bishop Timothy Manning sent them this encouraging letter: "I join with you that this year will see the completion of our plans for Bandini. We have purchased the extra property we needed." On June 14, 1957, the parish of St. Marcellinus was established, with Father Thomas G. Hayes named the founding pastor.

The 42-year-old New Orleans native started his first pastorate by searching for a location to celebrate Mass. On Sunday, July 14, in the upstairs dining room of Kelly's Restaurant, he celebrated the first Mass for 120 faithful and claimed that Christ had come to Bandini and gathered his friends around him in another "upper room."

A crew of parishioners "rigged the upper room for church" for 10 weeks until a former Protestant church became "home." Eventually a plot at Strong Avenue and Harbor Street was available and by Holy Saturday, 1959, Father Hayes sang the first High Mass in the new church...

Although several historical sources differ on the name and rank of St. Marcellinus (some claim he was a pope, others a martyred priest), it is recorded that many miracles have occurred in his name. Kind of like the phenomenon of this parish surviving in the midst of freeways and commerce."