



NEWS

From the First Council District

ED P. REYES, COUNCILMEMBER

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PRESS RELEASE

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REYES HELPS CHURCH FREQUENTED BY CESAR CHAVEZ ATTAIN HISTORICAL DESIGNATION - *Church of the Epiphany, the City's oldest Episcopal building, is unanimously declared Historical Monument # 807 by Council*

When the City first received the application to declare Church of the Epiphany, the City's oldest Episcopal church, a historical-cultural monument, few people looked beyond its structural value. And why should they have?

Built in 1888 and 1913, the church is composed of two structures: a Romanesque Revival chapel and a larger English Gothic Revival structure that houses the main sanctuary. The sandstone chapel has a peaked roof and a round divided window. The two-story sanctuary includes a small tower and facade with a large stained glass window in the form of a Gothic arch.

But there was something the Church of the Epiphany application did not include.

"I remember going there during the grape boycott of the early 70s," recalled Councilmember Ed P. Reyes, of Church of the Epiphany which the City Council today unanimously approved as Historical Monument #807. The church stands at 2808 Altura Street in the Lincoln Heights community where Reyes grew up.

"It was a hotbed of organizing activity for the United Farm Workers and a place Cesar Chavez had frequented," he said. "But none of that history was told in the application."

During the 1960s and 70s, Church of the Epiphany priests provided Cesar Chavez and the farm workers with hospitality and the parish hall for them to stay the night. The activist priests also worked with Chavez to launch boycotts that generated national support to achieve social justice and humane working conditions for farm workers.

"I just could not let that part of our City's history be forgotten," said the Councilmember.

So Reyes, acting as Chair of the City Council's Planning and Use Management Committee which approves these applications, exercised his power and delayed the action until the "other half of the story" could be included in the official City record.

Because of Reyes' efforts, the City's historical monument record will recognize that the church was a central post for Cesar Chavez and his farm workers who banded with the parish priests to organize boycotts that focused national attention on the injustices of farm worker life.

It will also note other major leaders who were part of the Church of the Epiphany including Bert Corona, one of the nation's most prominent Latino civil rights and labor rights activists, and Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez, the Denver civil rights organizer and poet who died earlier this year.

"What many have forgotten is that Lincoln Heights, like many parts of our city, has a very rich history of political activism and this church reaffirms that," Reyes said.

The final report will also include that in March 1968, Epiphany pastors and parishioners joined nearly 10,000 Latino high school and college students who walked out of five Los Angeles high schools. Similar walkouts occurred throughout the Southwest and Midwest. As part of the ongoing protest at the time, all of the Epiphany priests and many of the church's members sat in at the School Board meeting in support of the walkouts' goals.

The walkouts were a response to issues such as overcrowded classrooms, poor and antiquated learning materials and high dropout rates, "issues that we are still dealing with today," Reyes said.

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