



Office of the Chicago City  
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Office of the City Clerk

City Council Document Tracking Sheet

**Meeting Date:** 10/5/2011  
**Sponsor(s):** Balcer, James (11)  
**Type:** Resolution  
**Title:** Tribute to Late Reverend James Joseph Close  
**Committee(s) Assignment:**

### TRIBUTE TO REVEREND JAMES L. CLOSE

WHEREAS, In His Infinite Wisdom, Almighty God has granted eternal rest to His faithful servant, Reverend James Joseph Close on August 31, 2011, and

WHEREAS, James Joseph Close started life on North Side on April 14, 1936 as one of the six children born to the union of Catherine and Sylvester Close, who emigrated from Ireland. He was ordained as a Roman Catholic priest in 1963, and spent the first decade of his priesthood as a parish priest; and

WHEREAS, In July of 1973, His Eminence, the late John Cardinal Cody offered to make him the director of the Mission of Our Lady of Mercy, an aging West Side orphanage in need of dynamic leadership. At first, Father Close demurred but His Eminence insisted and the big burley priest with laughing blue eyes spent the next 33 years turning a troubled facility into a nationally recognized model for child care; and

WHEREAS, Father Close was without much formal training but he sought out and organized a professional staff who transformed what was a warehouse for 89 discarded boys with not much more to offer them but a place to sleep and three meals a day into a therapeutic institution that is currently home for 134 boys and girls, and

WHEREAS, Father Close changed the lives of many of those who otherwise were abandoned by society and became a true father figure and inspiration to the more than 9,000 children who lived at Mercy Home during his more than three decades as its director. Each child got a clean, home-like, safe environment with good food and no gangs, no drugs, no booze, and no fighting. School, homework, chores and therapy sessions were all part of the regimen. There was never a limitation on their own abilities and ambitions for their future. Many of those children went on to higher education in schools like Harvard, Yale and Stanford, and

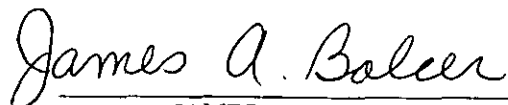
WHEREAS, Through Father Close's vision and tenacity, Mercy Home now provides critically-needed social services to more than 600 young men and women each year and has garnered the respect and support of thousands throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, Father Close leaves behind, to mourn his passing and celebrate his memory, his brothers of William, the Hon. Michael and Leo, a sister Sister Letitia, BVM, thirteen nieces and nephews, twenty-six grandnieces and grandnephews as well as a host of cousins in Chicago and Ireland; and

WHEREAS, The Honorable James A. Balcer, Alderman of the 11<sup>th</sup> Ward, has informed this august body of the passing of this gentle, gracious, and humble servant of God, now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED That we, the Mayor and members of the City Council gathered together this 5<sup>th</sup> Day of October, 2011 AD, do hereby express our sincere sorrow at the passing of Reverend James Joseph Close and extend our deepest condolences to his family and the many persons whose lives he touched.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That a suitable copy of this resolution be prepared and given to the family of Reverend James Joseph Close



JAMES A. BALCER  
Alderman – 11<sup>th</sup> Ward