



**Interfaith Center  
for Sustainable  
Development**



August 2, 2022

Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles  
3424 Wilshire Boulevard  
Los Angeles, California 90010-2241  
Attn: Most Reverend Archbishop José Gomez

Dear Archbishop Gomez,

We, as people of faith, write in the spirit of love and interfaith solidarity. The Murphy Drill Site, located in the heart of the West Adams neighborhood, is in close proximity to several care facilities, educational centers, congregations, and schools, including St. Agnes Catholic Church and Servants of Mary Convent. The Murphy Drill Site land is owned by the Los Angeles Catholic Archdiocese and leased to Freeport McMoRan Incorporated, a global mining company linked to human rights abuses and environmental degradation in several parts of the world.

Multiple studies demonstrate that those working and living near oil and gas drill sites experience disproportionate health effects, including nosebleeds, chronic headaches, increased risks of cancer, respiratory and cardiac illnesses, higher risk of miscarriage and preterm births. Sadly, these effects are being experienced by residents near the Murphy Drill Site. Sixteen thousand people live within a half-mile radius of the drill site. There has been on-going community advocacy calling for the closure of Murphy Drill Site because of damaging health effects from this site.

As you are aware, many toxic energy extraction sites are in communities of color, and are not afforded the same environmental protections as wealthier, white areas that have drilling sites. This unfortunate ongoing legacy of environmental racism is true of the Murphy Drill Site, whose community members are largely Latino and African American.

As faith leaders, protecting the lives of those in our community, especially the most vulnerable, is a sacred trust. Many in the Murphy Drilling Site area are faithful souls, active in Catholic and other denominations' schools and churches, and are left exposed to toxic pollution. We are also required to stand in solidarity with those who face racism and to dismantle these unjust systems. For the Los Angeles Catholic Archdiocese to profit from its lease with Freeport McMoRan is antithetical to the aims of Catholic Social Teaching of the dignity of every human person, solidarity with those facing injustice, and protection of all Creation, as well as the biblical injunction stated in Deuteronomy 4:15, "and you shall guard yourselves very well."

We are aware of the Los Angeles City Council's recent decision to phase out oil and gas drilling in Los Angeles. Yet, this process can take up to ten years, while communities will still suffer from ill effects. We call on you, as the spiritual leader of the Los Angeles Catholic Archdiocese, to immediately terminate Freeport McMoRan's lease and commit to no further drilling on the Murphy Drill Site. You have an exceptional opportunity and moral obligation to put an end to this lease that has for too long endangered and marginalized the West Adams community. We are standing by to assist you in making this happen.

Thank you.