

*Homily by Bishop Jaime Soto from Mass of Dedication for Holy Family Church in Weed, May 29, 2017*

Reunimos aquí al pie del Monte Shasta para dedicar este nuevo templo y re-comprometernos al ritmo de oración, proclamación, y caridad que debe emitirse de este lugar. Por eso, el Señor Jesús nos ha brindado este momento para que esta morada sagrada sirva como fuente y culmen de la vida cristiana.

I drove up this morning with Fr. Francisco Hernandez and deacons. Our route brought us up the center of the now verdant Sacramento valley. Rivers, still brimming from months of heavy rains and snows, nourish the rich soil making fields and orchards flower and ripen. The slow, gentle melt of snow from the mountains chill the valley's waterways and swell its banks. White capped Mount Shasta reigns over the valley like a stoic, stern monarch. The pristine peak looms majestic over the vast lands that depend upon the gurgling, gushing clear, crystal streams flowing from her benevolent abundance.

We passed through the many towns and villages as we journeyed in this procession toward the source of the valley's vigor. Circling the ancient summit we come to this place on northern slopes of Shasta where we will once again renew our covenant with the creator in unison with all creation to sing His praise and glory through our Lord, Jesus Christ.

After a long, difficult recovery the Catholic people of Weed now gather to dedicate a new Church and continue undaunted the mission of renewing the face of the earth.

The words of psalm 98 are fulfilled in our gathering, “Let the rivers clap their hands, the mountains shout with them for joy, Before the LORD who comes, who comes to govern the earth.” We can echo with holy certainty the words of the prophet Isaiah, “Many peoples shall come and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the LORD’s mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths.” (Is. 2.3) What was reduced to ashes in the tragic misfortune that afflicted so many in this city has now been rebuilt with renewed vigor so that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, may instruct us in his ways and we may walk in his paths.

More than provide shelter from shifting moods of weather, more than offer a practical place to gather in fellowship and prayer, the rich fabric of rituals and symbols brings us back into harmony with the rhyme and reason of all creation: to give worship to the one true God in the spirit and truth revealed by His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

In consecrating this building, we consecrate ourselves to the sacred purpose for which we were created by God. We employed human technology to the materials of this earth to assemble this holy abode where the Lord Jesus is the foundation. St. Paul told the

Ephesians, in Christ “you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit hovered over the first moments of creation and was present when Shasta and Lassen roared with volcanic fury, plowed with tectonic force the valley below, then filling it with rich volcanic earth. The same Spirit would linger so softly over the Virgin Mary of Nazareth and make of her the most pure of tabernacles. The Spirit, with wings extended, overshadowed the Lord Jesus as he rose from the waters of the River Jordan after the Baptism of John. With a mighty wind the Spirit stirred into the flame the faith of the Apostles at Pentecost. We now ask the Spirit to come here, with water, fire, and oil, to make this place a fountain of grace, a pool of mercy, a reservoir of faith, and a cascade of charity.

Here may the Lord Jesus continue renewing His creation in Spirit and in Truth, making all of you “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (I Pt. 2.9)

With this dedication, we come to understand that the work of God in us has only just begun. We must continue incorporating the living stones of women, children, and men whose stories and songs can resonate within these walls. Vayamos incorporando las piedras vivas de otros a este templo del Espíritu Santo. The baptismal font

will spawn the sons and daughters of God from different cultures, languages, and nationalities. La fuente bautismal generará a nuevos hijos de Dios y hermanos nuestros. These recognize one another as brothers and sisters of the one heavenly Father. The confessionals will be a haven of hope and healing for the sin-sick soul. El confesionario será el umbral de misericordia y reconciliación. The sacred oils will sanctify and soothe the disciple. Los santos óleos reaviven el cuerpo y alma de los discípulos. The ambo will echo the voice of the Good Shepherd to those who are lost. El ambón reverbera con la voz del buen pastor. In this sanctuary woman will be united to man in the bonds of marriage and share in God's creative love. El santuario sea el principio de muchos matrimonios y familias. The altar will unite our many sacrifices to the one, pure and acceptable offering of the crucified Christ. El altar sea como un imán espiritual llevándonos a una convivencia armoniosa. From his generous sacrifice we will be given a taste of the eternal banquet to come. Aquí comenzaremos a probar el gozo del cielo.

May this new Church, raised from the ashes of the old be source and summit of true worshippers who adore their heavenly Father and reverently serve their brothers and sisters in the spirit and truth of Jesus Christ.