

Dedication of St. Joseph's Church  
Vancouver, Washington  
August 16, 1992  
Most Reverend Thomas J. Murphy  
Archbishop of Seattle  
Homily

There are moments in the life of individuals, families and communities which have a special significance. There are also special moments of grace for people of faith who form a parish community. One such important moment is when people have worked together, sacrificed, and generously shared their resources to build a Church where they are able to gather to profess and celebrate their faith together.

We celebrate this moment of grace today with St. Joseph's Parish community here in Vancouver, Washington. We come to dedicate your new Church where you will be nourished by the Word of God and fed with the Body and Blood of Jesus at important moments in our life as individuals and as a parish community. It is here where you will gather each weekend to be people of faith and hope.

This afternoon, we listen to the Word of God. We meet the prophet Ezra who had the people of Israel renew the covenant with Yahweh. Ezra did more than simply read the text of the law of God. He let it have an impact on himself and the community. The people who heard the Word of God were renewed by this Word.

It is fitting that we hear the story of Ezra today, because we too must be renewed by God's Word when we gather in this Church. If this new Church building is to be more than a gathering place for people, we must recognize that God dwells in each of us. As St. Paul tells the Corinthians and each of us, "We are God's co-workers, God's field, God's building...Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"

As we hear the Word of God, we must translate the text. We must take Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman and dare to worship God in Spirit and truth. That is the challenge before us today as we dedicate this new Church for the parish community of St. Joseph's.

How do we translate the text of God's Word? We do so when we allow ourselves to be cleansed and blessed as this building has been cleansed and blessed. We translate the text of God's Word when we open ourselves up to the healing power of Christ by willing to be anointed as this building is anointed. This Church building is more than a structure of steel and stone, brick, glass and wood. It is a symbol of ourselves as people of faith in whom God dwells. The dedication of this Church is a call for all of us to dedicate ourselves to God as well, to translate the text of God's Word into our individual lives.

Dedication of St. Joseph's  
August 16, 1992  
Homily - Page 2

The construction of a new church is also an invitation to evangelize, to invite others in the community to be part of your community of faith. May you reach out to people who may have walked away from the Church; may you invite others to be part of your community. When we dare to evangelize, we become people who translate the text of God's Word.

We are here this afternoon and we are able to celebrate because people over these past forty years have heard God's Word and translated the text in their own lives. To the pastors and priests who have served here at St. Joseph's, thank you for your leadership and pastoral care. To the religious women and laity who have been so generous in their service and ministry, thank you for the gifts you have offered. To the people of this parish community, thank you for your extraordinary generosity and commitment which makes today a reality. Your support of your parish in the past and in the years ahead is an investment in your own future as a community of faith.

In a special way, thank you today to the parish leadership - the parish council, the building committee, the finance committee and all those who translated the text of God's love into service of this parish family. Thank you to Father Tuan for his ministry to you and thank you to you for helping him to see and experience the textbook of parish life and translating it into reality. And finally, thank you to your pastor, Father Ken Haydock. He is a man who pastors in the best sense of the word, a pastor who hears and sees God's Word spoken in the people whom he serves, a man whose dedication and commitment to this parish community is evident in the justifiable pride he takes in serving you. To Father Haydock, thank you for your vision and ministry. It is a gift which you share generously with your people.

You have built a Church. But the work has just begun to meet the challenge of being the Church in our own lives, in our service to others, in our fidelity to the Gospel, in the ongoing invitation to translate the text within ourselves, our families, our community. May you meet the challenge of being the Church for yourselves and this community which reveals and shares the presence of God.