

Address Delivered by the Honorable Ernesto Hidalgo,

Oficial Mayor de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, Estados Umdos Mexicanos, at the Unveiling of the Tablet at the Base of the Parent Fuerte Avocado Tree, Atlixco, Puebla, Mexico, 17 April 1938

Gentlemen: Twenty-seven years ago, Carl Schmidt appreciated the unusual characteristics of the tree which stands before us, and obtained from the owner, Senor Le Blanc, budwood which was shipped to California for trial. There, in the course of time, the variety proved productive and valuable, so much so, in fact, as ultimately to have resulted in the tribute which we are today celebrating. The California Avocado Association, grateful for the service which this tree has rendered its members, and through them, to California horticulture, has organized this pilgrimage, which has come more than three thousand kilometers for the sole purpose of honoring (I use the word advisedly) with a bronze tablet, this generous avocado, whose progeny have gone abroad, to give rise in a distant land to a new industry, .for I am told that seventy-five percent of the avocados of California are daughters of this tree of Atlixco.

Today's ceremony is, I believe, unique and exemplary. Its inspiring simplicity breathes the true Franciscan spirit—not that of mysticism, but that of kindness, generosity, gratitude, and fraternal understanding. Brother Tree, we address you with all respect to those men who are here being honored. Brother Tree, a group of human beings have come from afar to proclaim your usefulness, and to thank you. But you should remember that, when you sent your children abroad, telling them "Be fruitful, and multiply," they were only able to carry out your admonition because of the loving care which was given them by man.

"GIVE TO ME, AND I WILL, GIVE TO YOU"

I repeat that this ceremony is exemplary in its simplicity. It teaches us to love the trees, to which man owes so much; and it teaches us also to love those other gifts of nature which are useful to us. Nowhere better than in our dealings with nature can the Latin maxim be applied: do ut des. The land says to us, in fact, "give to me, and I will give to you." The trees and plants repeat these words, as do the domestic animals—as does everything which pays tribute to mankind. For these boundless gifts, for this endless cooperation, for this service for which no payment is ever made, we must give in return the only thing the land, the trees, the animals ask of us—solicitous care.

This simple and noble ceremony which recalls pagan feasts in honor of nature differs fundamentally from the ceremonies of our remote ancestors in one thing—theirs were inspired by fear, while this is inspired by gratitude. Citizens of California: Your homage opportunely and materially stimulates that cult of the tree which, year after year and due largely to the apostolic efforts of Ingeniero Miguel Angel de Quevedo, Mexico has been

attempting to instill into her children. We are grateful to you for this cooperation, and in the name of the Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, which I have the honor to represent, I thank you not alone for this, but also for the fact that your visit, as much as your gratitude, gives evidence of the cordial relations which exist between the United States and Mexico, relations which daily are becoming closer and which are benefiting both nations.

Translation by Wilson Popenoe.