

The greatest gathering of farm workers in the history of Delano celebrated the end of the 25-day fast of Cesar Chavez on Sunday, March 10.

Ten thousand farm workers joined in a procession behind the Virgen of Guadalupe, patron saint of Mexico, and the Thunderbird banners of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee.

Senator Robert F. Kennedy was near the front as the procession wound almost a mile through Delano Memorial Park to a temporary altar.

A multi-church mass with an opening prayer in Hebrew, a Protestant sermon and Catholic ritual preceded the breaking of the bread, *semita*, the bread of the poor of Mexico. The first to break bread were Chavez and Kennedy. The loaves were then shared by the entire assemblage as priests passed among the throng.

UFWOC vice president Julio Hernandez read Chavez' statement in Spanish and Rev. James Drake read it in English because "My heart is so full and my body too weak to say what I feel." Chavez sat too weak to even keep his head erect as his own words were spoken. "I undertook this fast because my heart was filled with grief and pain for the sufferings of farm workers... It was a fast for non-violence and a call to sacrifice.

"Our struggle is not easy. Those who oppose our cause are rich and powerful and they have many allies in high places. We are poor. Our allies are few. But we have something that the rich do not own. We have our own bodies and spirits and the justice of our cause as our weapons."

Senator Kennedy opened his remarks in a Spanish broken by his Massachusetts accent and set the audience to wild applause.

"I come to honor Cesar Chavez for his compassion, his honesty, his truth and his dedication," he said.



10,000 mass in gran fiesta

After praising the union members for "tremendous gains" in the last two years he said: "These victories are yours. You won them with your courage and with the leadership of Cesar Chavez. There is no one who can take them from you."

Paul Schrade, West Coast head of the United Auto Workers rose to the platform to deliver a \$50,000 check for construction of offices on the 40-acre site owned by UFWOC. He then gave an additional \$4000 check given by the members of the UAW training program. The money is to be used specifically for training of UFWOC personnel and consultants.

The crowd dispersed to enjoy a "comida cooperativa" a sort

of potluck of massive contributions from committees and families all over the state.

They returned to the speakers' stand for introductions of the organizers of the event and to hear a ringing declaration by Beles Tijerina, fiery leader of the land grant movement in New Mexico. "The press and propaganda makers of this country are trying to destroy the unity of our people. Of course I endorse the work of Cesar Chavez. Brother Chavez and all the brothers of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee are gallant human beings fighting to establish the dream and reality of America for those who have been the most disadvantaged, the farm workers."