

Good Sunday morning Church of the Apostles Family and Friends

Today we, and many other Christian churches prepare to celebrate the feast of Pentecost. Unlike the disciples of the first century, we will not be “gathered in one place.” But in our homes on Sunday, the Spirit still has the power it had then to fill the Church with Pentecostal fire. I encourage you to read the story of that first Pentecost in Acts 2:1-21.

Pentecost is also known as the Birthday of the Church. One of my favorite writings about Pentecost is found in a book entitled: *Reaching for Rainbows* by Ann Weems. I have shared other writings from Ann before. Hopefully you will share my enjoyment with this writing called:

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, CHURCH!

There was once a church that had only party rooms: The Session’s Party Room, the Music Party Room, the Feasting Party Room, the Do Justice Party Room, the Love Mercy Party Room, the Touch Lepers Party Room. In the center of the building was a large round room with an altar and a cross: God’s Party Room.

There was in the church an air of festivity and brightness that could not be denied. The people outside the church pointed their fingers and shook their heads: “Something should be done about that church.” They were especially upset when they saw that the members wore party hats and smiles both inside and outside the church.

Other congregations came to take a look and were shocked when they saw this church having so much fun during a worship service, snapping their fingers and dancing.

“Sacriligious,” screamed the crowd. But the people in the church just smiled at them and went right on doing things like taking people in wheelchairs to the park and playing ball with them.

When everybody else was collecting canned goods for the poor, this church bought pizza and marched right into the dingy, dirty, paint-peeling apartments and sat down to eat with the tenants.

They held picnics for the old folk’s home, and old men ran races while the congregation stamped their feet in applause. It was at one of these picnics that some of the members climbed up and the roof and shouted: “Good news!”

“Now we can get them for disturbing the peace,” said one of the outsiders. The police arrived with sirens, ready for the arrest, and came out two hours later wearing party hats and smiles.

One Sunday afternoon, the entire congregation met at the jail and passed out flowers to the prisoners. The following week after bread and wine and much laughter at the Lord’s

table, the people went to the hospital and asked to see the dying patients. They held their hands and mopped their brows and spoke to them of life.

“Disgraceful!!” shouted the crowd. “They must be stopped.” So the crowd appealed to the governing body of the denomination, and this committee of respected church people went to see for themselves.

“Do you deny the charges of heresy?” asked the committee. “Do you deny that you’ve mocked the church and the Lord?” The people of the church looked into the stern red faces and smiled at them. They held out their hands to the committee and led them to the Birthday Cake Room. There on a table sat a large cake decorated beautifully in doves descending and red flames and words that read: HAPPY BIRTHDAY, CHURCH! The people began cutting cake and blowing up balloons and handing out party hats to the committee members.

“Wait! Wait!” cried the chairperson. “Can’t you take anything seriously?”

“Yes,” said the people. “We take our commitment to the Lord very seriously indeed.”

“You don’t take it seriously at all,” interrupted the chairperson in loud voice and red face. “You have parties and wear silly hats and blow up balloons and sing and dance and have fun. Do you call that commitment?”

The people smiled at the chairperson and asked him if he’d like a glass of wine. The chairperson hit his fist on the table. “I don’t want wine, and I don’t want birthday cake. We’re here to reprimand you. We’re here to show you that you’re wrong. Can’t you be serious?”

“We are,” said the people. “We’re asking you take communion with us.”

“With birthday cake?” screamed the chairperson. “Outrageous!”

“Outrageous? We ask you to sit at our table and sup with us. God gave the Holy Spirit to believers, and that is something to celebrate! It’s an occasion for a party. We are celebrants of the gift of Life. We are community. We are God’s church. Why are your faces red when we are trying to do justice and love mercy? Why do you shake your fists at us when we are trying to discover the hurting and begin the healing? We are overjoyed that we can be the church, a community of people, who are many, yet one – who are different, but who walk together and welcome any who would walk with us. When we weep there is someone to weep with us and to affirm us and to take us to a party. When we see injustices, we must be about God’s business of freeing the oppressed. When we are faithless, we have God’s promise of forgiveness. Isn’t it remarkable that we can be God’s good news? Is it any wonder we have a church full of party rooms? There is so much love to celebrate!”

The committee stared at the people, and the people moved closer to them and put their arms around them. The committee chairperson stepped up to the table and sliced a

piece of birthday cake, took a bite, and laughed out loud. He began slicing and passing it out.

When the wine was poured and the hands were held, the chairperson raised his glass and said: "There is so much Love to celebrate! Happy Birthday, Church!"

Hopefully the point is clear, and the message is obvious – **Jesus is counting on YOU and ME.** Even though there are times when we feel inadequate, afraid, confused, and overwhelmed, when we feel hard-pressed to face up to the demands, the good news is: **We are not alone! The Holy Spirit is here to melt us, mold us, fill us, and use us.** May it be so in all of our lives.

Blessings,
Pastor Narda

PRAYER:

*Living God, may your Spirit fall afresh on me.
May your Spirit melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.
Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me. Amen.*