

Laurie's Message for Friday May 1, 2020



Good Morning Apostles Family and Friends!

Today is May 1st! Otherwise known as May Day! In many cultures, today would be a day of celebration with children dancing joyfully around the Maypole while singing songs of spring. Just like so many holidays, May Day began from a pagan celebration which dates back to the days before the birth of Christ. I hope you will indulge me by reading another history lesson.

When the Druids occupied the British Isles (Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, England, Wales and numerous smaller islands), May 1 was the second most important holiday of the year and was known as the festival of Beltane. The May 1 custom was the setting of a “new” fire. And the fire itself was thought to lend life to the burgeoning springtime sun. Cattle were driven through the fire to purify them. Men, with their sweethearts, passed through the smoke for good luck. When Romans came to occupy the British Isles, May was an extremely popular feast time. They devoted the day to primarily the worship of Flora, the goddess of flowers. It was in her honor that a five-day celebration was held from April 28 through May 2 called Floralia. And gradually the rituals of the Floralia were added to that of Beltane. People celebrated the coming of warm weather and the commencement of the planting season. The traditional maypole may have represented the axis around which the world turned, the proverbial Tree of Life. May Day festivities celebrated the fertility of the land and venerated the gods that allowed the production of a bounteous crop.

As Christianity spread across Europe and beyond, May day lost its association with pagan religious practices, but the celebration of the date remained as a secular holiday. The maypole was frequently seen in Medieval Europe and remains a part of springtime celebrations to this day. May Day usually involves children wearing fresh flowers skipping around a wooden maypole holding long, colorful streamers that gradually wind around the pole while singing.

May Day was also celebrated by some early European settlers in America. The tradition of celebrating May Day by dancing and singing around a maypole, tied with colorful streamers survived as a part of English tradition. However, May Day has never been celebrated with as much enthusiasm in the United States as in Great Britain. In some parts of the United States, May baskets are made. These are small

baskets filled with flowers or candy and left on someone's doorstep or doorknob. The giver rings the bell and runs away!

Since the 1880's May Day has shared May 1st in the United States with International Workers' Day. In the 1800's the working class endured dreadful conditions such as twelve-plus hour workdays, dangerous and dirty factories, low wages and basically no ability to negotiate for improvement. Therefore, the socialist/communist ideas coming out of Europe were attractive to the American laborer. Dozens of groups of workers began to assemble and protest for change. The largest demonstration came in the form of a massive strike held in Chicago's Haymarket Square on May 1, 1886. The strike began relatively peaceful but after a couple of days strikebreakers and police broke the picket lines and a riot erupted after a stick of dynamite was thrown into the crowd. Many protestors and police were killed. That lead to a high-profile trial that most saw as a travesty where several were convicted of conspiracy and hanged despite little evidence that they had anything to do with the blast. This became known as the Haymarket Massacre (also called the Haymarket Affair) and became a milestone for the modern socialist movement. In 1889 during the International Socialist Conference, May 1st was declared a day designated for labor, called International Worker's Day honoring those who participated in the Haymarket protest. Therefore, May Day is seen by many in the United States not as a time to dance around a Maypole, but a time to proclaim the virtues of socialism. In 1894, the first Monday in September became a national holiday known as Labor Day.

I, however, look forward to May 1st every year for a totally different reason! It is the opening day at my favorite local produce stand – Frantz Produce! If you have never had the opportunity to visit Frantz Produce, I highly recommend you do so this late spring or summer. They are located at their family's farm on Route 16 right across from the Keystone Family Restaurant, and relatively near our church! They have a wide assortment of fruits, vegetables, and flowers, but are really known for their delicious and locally grown strawberries, tomatoes and sweet corn when in season. Not only is their produce of high quality, they are some of the friendliness people you will ever meet!

So, why do we say "Mayday!" in an emergency or situation of distress? My inquisitive mind wanted to know, so please indulge me for just a few more paragraphs. It has nothing to do with May 1st, pagan celebrations or worker rights! In 1923, a time when there was a lot of air traffic between England and France, there was apparently many international mishaps over the English Channel and there was a need for a good distress signal that everyone would understand. The existing distress signal at that time "S.O.S." (Save Our Souls) often caused confusion when used telephonically. It was not, and is not today, uncommon for a "s" to sound like a "f" when heard over the telephone or radio. A senior radio officer at Croydon Airport in London, Frederick Mockford, came up with the idea of "mayday" because it sounded like the French word *m'aidez*, which means "help me." Should you ever need it, procedure calls for the mayday distress signal to be said three times in a row (Mayday! Mayday! Mayday!) so that it will not be mistaken for another word or phrase that might sound similar under noisy conditions.

S.O.S. has become the standard emergency signal for ships' wireless operators transmitting via Morse code because it is an unmistakable pattern (...---...), it is easy to remember, and it is easy to distinguish. But, if you ever find yourself stranded on a desert island or in a snowy area, stomping out S.O.S. would make your situation crystal clear to anyone flying in an airplane above, so do not hesitate to use it!

Dear Lord. Thank you for always being our lifeline and responding to our Mayday calls and S.O.S. signals. Whether we are celebrating or protesting, please help us to remember to pause and reflect on what is truly important in our lives. Lead us to work together in harmony to improve undesirable situations. Help us to always remember your lessons and the sacrifice you made to allow us to live and learn.

As we move forward in re-opening institutions and businesses; and resume social gatherings, help us to remember that we all share a common goal of achieving a new normal as quickly and safely as we can. Remind us that there is no single right way or wrong way to achieve this goal. We put our faith in you that you will guide us in the application of available information and commonsense.

Bless those who are sick or in need and help them find comfort and peace. Bless those who are tirelessly researching COVID 19 to find a cure and those who are tirelessly providing healthcare to those afflicted. And, please bless those who are lost and help them find their way back to you. Amen.

I hope you all have a wonderful weekend! Stay safe and well!

Laurie