

**May 3 2020 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter Year A \*Acts 2:42-47**

In this brief passage we have the first description of a Christian Church. It appears immediately after Peter's Pentecost sermon which motivated 3,000 people to be baptized. It ends with the statement that the "Lord added daily to their number those who were being saved". So between the description of what God was doing, there is a very brief but intense outline of what the church was doing. Pentecost was 50 days after passover so many of the new converts were likely pilgrims who stayed for both feasts, perhaps lodging with friends or relatives, as the text describes "from house to house".

For these pilgrims, after the death and resurrection of Jesus everything had changed. Luke describes a dynamic church which had a tremendous reputation stating, "Everyone was in awe" and "they were enjoying favor with all the people". So what did they do to initiate and maintain this dynamism.? They continued steadfastly in "The apostles teaching, the breaking of bread and prayers". They also "stuck together", they shared everything even selling goods and possessions. The language indicates that even property was sold and the receipts distributed to any who had need. In Santa Cruz where property is like solid gold that seems an incredible statement, to put people over property. It was just as difficult then in an agrarian society where land was everything to a family.

Like the early church we are living in the power of God's grace. We have the Spirit and we have been baptized. And God works within our hearts and the hearts of our neighbors daily. So what should be our tasks while God works with us?

Some of this is obvious. We need to read scripture daily, pray daily and seek fellowship daily. The fellowship is tricky but possible. There is email, face time, Skype, or even the simplest technology of all, the phone. Since this pandemic I have had wonderful phone conversations. Of course the new thing is Zoom. As disciples we

don't meet in an upper Room anymore but an "Upper Zoom". Zoom, like any new thing, can be tricky. While on Zoom I have heard things like "You have gone dark, are you in the witness protection program?", "I don't think that is him, I think that is his ceiling fan" or "Is that a cat on your shoulder" or "I can see you but cannot hear you". More commonly I hear, "I just can't get in", which leads to real frustration as kinks are worked out because people want to be included and loved. We all wish to belong to something outside ourselves, not just to receive, but to give.

We don't have all things in common, but everyone on earth is fighting common enemies in disease, hunger, and poverty all intensified by the Corona Virus. So something else we can do is give to various charities and our church, which is courageously carrying on in this incredibly difficult climate.

All of this is to say that the church is in someways like an extended family. When I was young I knew that I was welcome at the table of any household in my extended family. I also knew that after the meal I would be treated just like the immediate family in that house and expected to pitch in with clean up and projects. As a youth this made me feel part of something bigger.

Here today we will be taking virtual communion, all of us are welcome and all of us are part of something bigger, the family of God, the Church of Jesus Christ which is empowered by his Spirit.