

## **Devotion for Week of Pentecost, 2022**

### **Rev. Jeanne Simpson**

Well, we came, we wore red, and we ate. All in all, a pretty satisfying day! I hope you all were able to take home some leftovers. The Simpsons feasted on Serena's barbeque Sunday night, along with Joyce Smith's pound cake and Jennifer Rohrbach's peach cobbler. Yums.

I hope everyone got a cross and a red ribbon bookmark to take home as a reminder of the joy of the Holy Spirit coming to the early believers and forming the church. Most denominations think of Pentecost as the church's birthday. This day was so special in the United Kingdom that there was a public holiday the next day, on Monday. The day was also called "Whit Sunday", "Whitsunday" or "Whitsun." The word "whit" comes from "white," because the church often baptized members on Pentecost Sunday, and they wore white robes.

The Christian church adapted the Jewish festival of Pentecost/Shavuot but celebrates it as the 50<sup>th</sup> day from Easter Sunday (including Easter), rather than Passover. The Eastern Orthodox considers Pentecost to be the second holiest feast day, after Easter. Members carry greenery and flowers to symbolize the bounty of the earth and the renewal of life, reminiscent of the Jewish Shavuot festival of the first wheat harvest.

In the Middle Ages, cathedrals and great churches throughout Western Europe were fitted with a peculiar architectural feature known as a Holy Ghost hole: a small circular opening in the roof that symbolized the entrance of the Holy Spirit into the midst of the congregation. At Pentecost, these Holy Ghost holes would be decorated with flowers, and sometimes a dove figure lowered through into the church while the narrative of Pentecost was read. Holy Ghost holes can still be seen today in European churches, such as Canterbury Cathedral.

Churches celebrate Pentecost in various ways, but red paraments are usually displayed to symbolize joy and fire, with a descending dove to represent the Holy Spirit. In Sicily and parts of Italy, red rose petals are sometimes thrown from the balcony to symbolize the tongues of fire. The Moravian church uses trumpets and brass ensembles to represent the wind in their music.

In Ukraine the springtime feast day of Zeleni Sviata became associated with the Pentecost. The customs for the festival were performed in the following order: first, home and hearth would be cleaned; second, foods were prepared for the festival; finally, homes and churches were decorated with wildflowers and various types of green herbs and plants. A seven course meal may have been served as the Pentecost feast which may have included traditional dishes such as cereal with honey (kolyvo), rice or millet grains with milk, sauerkraut soup (kapusniak), chicken broth with handmade noodles (iushka z zaterkoiu), cheese turnovers (pyrizhky syrom), roast pork, buckwheat cakes served with eggs and cheese (blyntsi), and baked kasha.

I don't know how many Ukrainians were able to celebrate Pentecost this year, but my prayer is that they had some sort of special service. I will remember them this week, knowing that red to them may only mean blood and death, rather than joy. Let us all pray for peace there, as our brothers and sisters in Christ continue to suffer.

*Jeanne*