

# CHARLTON CHURCH SERMON

Sunday, April 18

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“Happy Birthday: All for One, One for All”

Acts 2:43-47

If I told you the following: "Unus pro omnibus, omnes pro uno." Would you tell me what I meant? Probably not, right? Because what I just said is in Latin. But what if now I say, "One for all, all for one." This sounds a lot more familiar. Do you remember where that phrase comes from?

It is said that it is the unofficial motto of Switzerland. In French, this phrase, "Un pour tous, tous pour un," was made famous by the writer Alexandre Dumas in the 1844 novel *The Three Musketeers*. You may have read the book, but you most likely saw some of the movie or its remakes.

But what is interesting about this motto used by these musketeers?

In Dumas's novel, we see these three characters, named Athos, Porthos, Aramis, and a young apprentice of the Musketeers called D'Artagnan, who stayed loyal to each other. Together they serve King Louis XIII and face his prime minister, Cardinal Richelieu. His agents Milady de Winter and the Count of Rochefort safeguard Queen Anne of Austria's honor. But they are more than just co-workers and fellow soldiers who defend a common purpose. They are like brothers, united by the same code of loyalty and honor.

Today's biblical text speaks to us precisely of some of these words: common good, companionship, brotherhood, loyalty, honor. These are words that often seem so foreign to us that we live in such an individualistic world, where the common good is not as important as my personal good.

In this passage, we have a kind of lighting summary of the characteristics of the early church. Some of these characteristics are learning and teaching, fellowship, prayer, reverence, sharing, among several others. But today, I would like to share just four of these characteristics of the church as a way of reflecting on our own characteristics as a church.

The first characteristic of the early church is that it is a learning church. It persisted in listening to the apostles as they taught. The church that does not dedicate time to learning

is a church that remains ignorant. It is a church that does not grow. And I'm not just talking about learning from the Word of God. I'm talking about learning from experiences living as a church, from the successes, but also from the failures. Today I ask you: How are we learning from this time of pandemic? What are we getting out of this challenging time as a church?

The second characteristic is that it is a church that lives in fellowship. We could also call it like living in "togetherness." Many use the word to describe this collective experience of the church through the word "Koinonia."

The word "Koinonia" means common-life, communion, a shared life. This is based on sharing the risen Christ's life with his people from him in the Christian community. This word is related to the bonds that are generated between the members of the church and God. How is our relationship with each other as members of the church? How is our relationship, as a church, with God?

The third characteristic of this early church is that it is a prayerful church. The church members knew that they could not meet life in their own strength and did not need to. They always went to God in prayer. It is true! We pray individually; we ask for prayer for family and friends. But, how is our prayer life, as a church, as a community of faith?

The fourth characteristic of this church's many characteristics, is that it is a sharing church. These early Christians had an intense feeling of responsibility for each other. They had a sense of common good, companionship, brotherhood, loyalty, honor.

SO WHERE DOES FAITH MEET LIFE?

Friends, during this time, the church staff and I have been reading some books, which call us to prepare for the post-pandemic church. Among them is this one, which is called: "The Post-Quarantine Church" by Thom S. Rainer. Why? Because as a church, we have to prepare for this great challenge that God is showing us. This challenge includes learning, having fellowship time, spending a lot of time in prayer, and sharing what God shows us as a church.

When the pandemic started, many people were concerned about "the church being closed. Thom Rainer says in his book we usually tend to say: "I am going to church." Mistakenly thinking that it only refers to the building. He says that we should say, "I am going to gather with the church." Because we are all the church, not just the building. And

it is in the midst of this "gathering" that things happen. It is in that "gathering" that we worship God, as a church - The body of Christ. Be "One for all and all for one."

I don't know if you knew that during this time of the pandemic, our streaming of Sunday services has been seen by people not only from Charlton. But by people from various places, even from other countries. Isn't that a change? How do we adapt to that change? How do we face this new church that will be called Post-Pandemic church?

Some time ago, Pastor Adam Hamilton, the leading pastor of the Resurrection Church in Leawood, Kansas, visited and spoke at our annual conference. That day his preaching was related to how God's word does not change; instead, the media change. He used the following allegory.

The Beatles' discography was produced first in vinyl format (EP and LP). After that, cassettes and compact discs (CDs). Then we could put their music on a flash drive and listen to it on MP3 and digital media. But no matter what audio or recording system has been used, mono or stereo. If we listen to the songs: "Yesterday" or "Let It Be." We will always recognize them because it is the same music. The only thing done with the Beatles' music was to adapt to the times and to the most current recording and sound system. Let me repeat it, the music is the same. It just adapted to the times.

I ask you, how are we adapting as a church to these new times? How are we carrying the same message of salvation, hope, and love of Christ to others; in this time of the pandemic without losing being a community? But the question goes further, how will we continue to do it post-pandemic?

There is a quote that says: "Adaptation is a profound process, it means you figure out how to thrive in the world." To adapt is not to renounce the essence of the message of Christ, but rather to find ways to be Christ in the world today; where we can continue to be a community, where we can continue "gathering with the church," we can continue to be "One for all, and all for One." And that "One" is Christ, our Lord, and Savior.

As we approach the celebration of Pentecost, the birth of the Christian Church. May this time be a time of preparation and discernment so that we can continue being a blessing among ourselves and others in this moment and in the coming new post-pandemic church. May the Lord bless us with the same characteristics of the Early Church. Then, we can say, "day by day, the Lord added to their number those who were being saved." – Amen <><