

Ready, Steady Church – Celebrating Pentecost 2024 (With thanks to Dr Sam Wells, How to Preach)

Part 1 - I love cookery programmes! Master Chef at the moment!

A favourite Cookery programme that my mother used to love watching was: Ready, Steady, Cook!

The contestants were given a bag of mystery ingredients and then given a short time to make up a dish – using these ingredients and a few extras in the pantry!

Here are three trays – would anyone like to unveil one and have a guess? X3 – across the church – those around you can offer suggestions – although “Too many cooks spoil the broth!”

Today – we are celebrating – Ready, Steady, Church!

QUESTION TO THINK ABOUT as we celebrate Pentecost.. **what are the ingredients that make up Church?** The story we are going to hear gives us some clues as well as the short Gospel reading: **READING – SONG – GOSPEL:**

What are some of the key ingredients for Ready, Steady Church?

- 1. PEOPLE** – Look at those first people – ok they are **fragile, fearful, fallible** - but that is only kind of people the world contains! So let's not complain about the ingredients before we have even started! Jesus has given them a whole life direction – to share the gospel to the ends of the earth!

So here we are today – people and that is already – a lot! We are not alone – and we cannot make Church alone. We may feel a bit battered and bruised by life (**like this APPLE**) – or **past our sell-by date** – or **not mature enough!**

We may feel like taking our ball home and hoping that faith can be just a private thing.. But actually – to be church – we have to do this together!

Billy Graham used to say: “Don't join an ideal church: you'll spoil it.” There is no ideal church – only the church made up of ordinary people.

2. DIFFERENCE – To make church – **we need different ingredients**. You cannot make a dish up with just one ingredient - well you can but it might be a bit dull!

Making a meal on Ready, steady cook – or a MasterChef invention – is about getting the best out of **different ingredients**.

And look at the different disciples – with their diverse backgrounds and livelihoods – fishing and tax collecting... (not aware of how many women – but I bet they were there!) And Jesus' followers would soon discover that the Kingdom of God was open to both Jew and Gentile! Look at all the people who gathered in Jerusalem – that amazing list of nationalities / identities!!

Look at us today – **Variety is the spice of life!** – different ages, different nationalities, different backgrounds, different languages, different talents and resources, different perspectives.. Yet Church is about being **called out** (ekklesia) by God and **called together to testify to God's love through Jesus Christ**.

So far we have the ingredients: PEOPLE, DIFFERENCE (VARIETY),

3. ORGANISATION - The next ingredient is - Organisation –if you read on in Acts – see eggs of organising themselves – Acts 6 – when they were growing in numbers – it needed more careful planning of roles: some were complaining that the needs of the vulnerable were not being met.. so they selected people for this task and set up a feeding programme.

Just had our AGM! Just had a chance to think about who we are together – **how we are organised**.. Here at La Côte - we have a Council, pastoral care, safeguarding, training – care – attention to detail – resources!

And what a lot can happen for the good **when we get organised! The sum of lots of parts, favours, contacts, generosity, experience and skills all working together - SYNERGY - Eg – Christmas lunch in Divonne last December! Quiz Night! Cookery Book – Cold Lake plunge - Every act of worship. The Food Bank with so many taking part!**

4. HUMILITY – a good dose of it! I am always nervous of master chef contestants who are too sure of themselves!

One woman started off saying – “I don’t think I have any weaknesses in the kitchen!” I cringed! She lasted about two weeks!

Not getting ahead of ourselves – thinking we can go it alone – and have all the correct ingredients! The recipe is not done yet!

After all – the church has been trying to get it right for over 2,000 years! And we are only too aware of so many failures and distortions in church life. In every generation, the church faces fresh challenges – and we need to listen to different voices that have maybe not been heard well before.

5. Humility leads us to PENTECOST and the GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The Holy Spirit is, if you like, the Master Chef who creates Church out of these raw ingredients! Then and now:

Openness to the Spirit, born of humility. The disciples knew their need, in their fear, failures, fragility – they gathered together to pray and they were **OPEN to the Spirit.** *May we stay open to the Spirit for our lives individually – and together as Church.*

The wind of the Spirit sent them out into the streets, away from the safety of the upper room, to speak of God’s love. *We pray for the Wind of the Spirit to lead us from fear and isolation to encounter in the love of Christ.*

The fire of the Spirit gave them fresh courage to speak about their experience of Jesus which had led them to God. *We pray for the Holy Spirit to kindle the fire of courageous love in us.*

The Spirit gave them the words to speak to all nations – all ages and gender – young and old, sons and daughters - not just to their own kind – but to different tribes, races, nationalities – to give testimony to all nations. This is not a private faith for like-minded people – but God’s love for all. *We pray for the Holy Spirit to speak through our lives and words of God’s love for all.*

The Spirit guided them and guides us into truth – not always with wind and fire and tongues! *We pray for the Spirit to guide us in the quiet of our hearts and in our attentive listening.*

The only church that really matters is one that reflects the love and life of Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit alive in us. So, this AGM and Pentecost day, we resolve as church to live in NO power but the Spirit's power.

Come, Holy Spirit, kindle in your Church the fire of your love, Amen.

