

FROM: THE DESK OF PASTOR CARUANA
TO: The People of Zion
DATE: April 17, 2020

HOLY HUMOR SUNDAY
(What is that?)

Hi All ... It's me again.

Just want to let you know about this Sunday's worship service. Here are some basic facts:

- It will *not* be held in the church this week! (No big surprise there!!)
- It will be videoed. That means you can participate in worship whenever you want in the comfort of your home. You can even watch the service multiple times if you so choose. (How cool is that? The answer to that is, "Pretty cool!")
- It will be a different kind of service (in a good way)!
- It will be a Lutheran service (of course!).
- It will include humor during a time of darkness. (This is very good.)
- It is a time to laugh, sing, and be silly.
- It is intended to generate hope and smiles when people are getting bored, frustrated, antsy, and afraid.
- It is theologically based.
- It is referred to as Holy Humor Sunday ... a tradition begun during the early days of Christianity.
- Dress is very casual. I plan to wear a pair of crazy socks from my sock collection. (Yes, I am a sock addict.)

So, what is this Holy Humor Sunday you ask. Let me explain.

In 1988, the Fellowship of Merry Christians (That's really the true name of the group) began encouraging churches and prayer groups to resurrect Bright Sunday celebrations and changed the name to "Holy Humor Sunday". Today "Holy Humor Sunday" reminds us that through the resurrection, Jesus had the last laugh over Satan and that Jesus is the LIFE (of the party).

The custom was rooted in the thinking of early church theologians (like Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, and John Chrysostom) that God played a practical joke on the devil by raising Jesus from the dead. The early theologians called it "*Risus paschalis*" - the Easter laugh.

For centuries in Eastern Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant countries, the week following Easter Sunday, was observed by the faithful as "days of joy and laughter" with parties and picnics to celebrate Jesus' resurrection. At that time, of course, social distancing was an unknown entity and the Covid-19 did not exist. So, for we at Zion, to resurrect the idea of Holy Humor Sunday, things have had to be scaled back while still sending the message of hope, joy, and laughter. This is a good thing for me, since practical jokes were often directed toward pastors and other religious leaders while singing and dancing were going on.

Many churches from different traditions have responded enthusiastically to Holy Humor Sunday. In fact, Holy Humor Sunday services have often brought back large crowds to churches on a Sunday when church attendance typically drops dramatically.

A Word about Lutheran Laughter & Holy Humor Sunday

Sonia C. Solomonson, managing editor of *The Lutheran (now Living Lutheran)*, wrote a splendid article several years back entitled “Two Parts Faith, One Part Humor” reporting on how Lutheran congregations are observing Holy Humor Sunday.

For instance, Pastor Jim Arends of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in La Crescent, MN, said, “This gives us a chance to celebrate the joy of Easter in a fun way a week after we’ve celebrated it in a glorious way. We don’t celebrate this to increase attendance, but it has had that effect.”

The churches used either appointed lessons for the day or chose other lessons, and added Easter songs, songs of joy, and camp songs.

Solomonson concluded: “So who says we can’t laugh and celebrate in our places of worship? We can find a way to mix faith and humor, stir it into our lives, and let it simmer into a rich stew that will feed all those around us.

Holy Humor Sunday also helps to dispel the image of Christians as people who are stuffy, boring, and afraid to have a good time.

May you all enjoy Sunday’s Holy Humor Sunday service!

P.S. How about a few samples of some Holy Humor. These are not to be used to judge the upcoming Holy Humor Sunday service at Zion! They are just to get you in the mood!

- (1) The worship service was just beginning, the opening hymn was already playing when a stranger entered the church, marched straight down the center aisle and sat himself in the very first pew. “Wow,” thought the pastor, “that doesn’t happen very often. I wish all my parishioners were that enthusiastic!” ... and he went on with the service.

At the end of the worship, the pastor was greeting the parishioners as they left. Since the stranger came so late and sat at the very front, he was one of the last ones out. “Welcome, it is good to have you with us this morning,” said the pastor. “Are you new to this area and looking for a church home?” “No,” not really,” he said. “Actually, this is a professional visit,” replied the stranger. “A professional visit?” said the pastor. “Are you a clergy person?” “No,” the man said, “I’m a bus driver, and what I’m trying to do is to figure out how you get everyone to sit in the back.”

- (2) A rabbi and a priest got into a car accident and it was a pretty bad one. Both cars were totally demolished, but amazingly, neither one of them was hurt. They crawled out of their cars and the rabbi saw the priest’s collar and said, “So you’re a priest. I’m a rabbi. Just look at our cars. There’s nothing left, but we are unhurt. This must be a sign from God. God must have meant that we should meet and be friends and live together in peace the rest of our days.” And the priest said, “I agree with you completely. This must be a sign from God.”

Then the rabbi said, “I’ll be darned, look at this. Here’s another miracle. My car is completely demolished but this bottle of Mogen David wine didn’t break. Surely God wants us to drink this wine and celebrate our good fortune. And so he handed the bottle to the priest. The priest said he agreed, took a few big swigs, and handed the bottle back to the rabbi. The rabbi took the bottle, put the cap back on without drinking any, and handed

it back to the priest. The priest asked, “Aren’t you going to have any?” And the rabbi replied, “No ... I think I’ll just wait for the police to get here.”

- (3) Attending a wedding for the first time, a little girl whispered to her mother, “Why is the bride dressed in white?” The mother replied, “Because white is the color of happiness, and today is the happiest day of her life.”

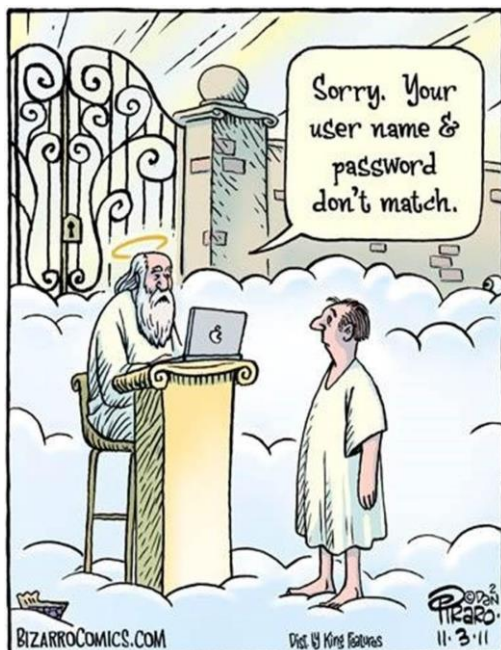
“Oh,” said the little girl. “Then why is the groom wearing all black?”

- (4) At the end of the announcements before worship, the pastor said, “There will be a meeting of the Board immediately after the service.”

When the worship was over, the Board gathered in one of the Sunday School classrooms for the announced meeting. But there was a stranger in their midst – a visitor who had never attended their church until that morning.

“My friend,” said the pastor, “Didn’t you understand that this is a meeting of the Board?”

“Yes,” said the visitor, “and after your sermon this morning, Pastor, I thought I should come to the meeting because I gotta think I’m as bored as anyone here.”



Bye for now!