

***That Makes Sense, Doesn't It?*** (Acts 2:14a,22-32; 1Pet 1:3-9; Joh 20:19-31).

\* It is no wonder that people cannot find the words for something they experience or perceive.

The phrases, for example, like *I don't know how to say*, or *It is hard to find a word*, are familiar to us.

And this applies not only to ordinary people but to experts as well. The confirmation of what we say is found in (1 Pet 1:3:9), our Sunday reading. In our text (vv.8,9) Peter made clear the meaning of joy as experienced by God's elect. But the apostle couldn't find a word to define that joy; the best solution to this problem he found in word that English versions of the Bible translate as *unspeakable or inexpressible joy*. It says, <sup>8</sup>... *now you don't see him (Jesus Christ), yet believing, you rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory*. In fact, Peter's recipients knew what the apostle meant by using an indefinite definition for their joy. Peter was right because there are no words by which Christians can express their inward joy caused by the fulfillment of their beliefs, (v.9).

\* The next example of something unspeakable or inexpressible came from the media recently. It was said about the loss of lives, the demolishing of homes, and the destroying of belongings caused by the tornados ripped across Alabama and Mississippi. It is hard to find the proper words by which means we can define the feelings and pain of those who lost their families and homes. The one thing we can offer to them now is just our unspeakable regret and sorrow. On the other hand, today God also offers, but in this instance, the joyful message of Jesus' resurrection to all who endure trials and persecutions. If God' message is heard and believed, it produces hope and consolation because its effectiveness is based not on human wisdom and power but exclusively on the fulfillment of God's words.

\* All readings assigned for today breathe joy and hope, where before there were only distress and fear. The first selection from (Acts 2:14a,22-32) speaks of the event that took place on Pentecost. On hearing Peter and the other apostles, the evil deeds of the audience were exposed by the Spirit. *"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders ... , you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men, (v.22,23)*. When people heard and believed that Jesus is the Messiah, who came back to life; they were extremely distressed anticipating judgment. *"What should we do, brothers?"(v.37)* they exclaimed. But when the people heard the message of forgiveness for Christ's sake, they were filled with unspeakable joy. In response they immediately repented, baptized, and followed the apostolic teaching of righteousness, (v. 42).

\* The second selection from (1Pet 1:3-9) is the apostolic exultation. Those who believed were chosen; that is to say we are also Jesus' inheritance, (v.4). We are filled with unspeakable joy by virtue of Jesus' resurrection in us.

God the Father has given us new birth, said Peter, and it is more than just believing in Peter's message, but it is what we experience. We have a sense that with the coming of a new day, our salvation is getting closer; a little more and the goal of our faith will bring its fruit accompanied with one joy upon another, that is to say, an inexpressible joy, (v.8).

\* The final reading from John's gospel (Joh 20:19-31) narrates Jesus' coming to his frightened disciples. "Peace be with you," were the first words addressed to the apostles and to all God's elect after them. When the disciples perceived the significance of events and saw the brands of crucifixion on Jesus' body, they believed and believing they were over-joyed, (v.20). Their Teacher, also the Messiah of Israel, came to life so that his disciples might have life. Israel, you are not forgotten, your trials, pain and persecution are known to the Lord; a little more and they will be gone forever, (1Pet 1:6) that is what Peter wanted to say. Your God, O Israel, is the Lord, and you are the people of his pasture, (Psa 95:7). Our ongoing trials and suffering are not comparable with the unspeakable joy that is ahead. Even today we have a reason to have joy because we are receiving the goal of our faith, (1Pet 1:8).

\* If we would recall Jesus' resurrection an event apart from our destiny, we would not have much hope, consolation, and unspeakable joy. But speaking on Jesus' resurrection, we also recall ours as the inseparable events. The apostle says, God started mastering our salvation when we were buried with Jesus by baptism unto death, ( Rom 6:4). However, we are still mortal; someday we'll die as all human beings before us. And what is that power by which means we are brought back to life? The answer to this question is with Jesus who died and was buried, but on third day he was raised, (1Co 15:4). To be brief, we decide to avoid the theological discussion of the matter; instead, we'll tell you a fairytale. Here is the story with the title, *The Elephant and Crocodile*.

\* Once upon a time, there was a crocodile, and his name was Pluto. He was as strong as a monster; he had teeth as swords and fangs as knives. His quick-tempered character prevented him from making friends, even with other crocodiles. In addition, Pluto had a pretty good appetite that created a certain problem for other tenants especially if taken into consideration the fact that his hunting for food was more than a necessity of life - it was his hobby. The next important detail about Pluto is that he recently moved away to another tropical lake with villages on its borders.

\* Soon after moving, Pluto discovered the fertility of that area. The lake and the surrounding land swarmed with wild and domestic animals. Then, the record says, for two years or so Pluto infested the neighborhood, taking sheep, cows, horses and sometimes a man.

It seemed no one wild beast could compete with Pluto when he hunted down the bathing animals; but a certain incident turned the world upside down. It happened when Pluto was fishing for lunch in the shallow water. Suddenly, he noted something very much resembling the leg of a fatty swine. Being allured, he moved swiftly and gripping that leg from below, he began pulling it down in an attempt to drag all the body to the bottom of his lake. But he couldn't prevail with that one; surprisingly, the mighty power of that one lifted Pluto from the water, and he was exposed as well as that one who had taken him from the hidden place, and it was the elephant, as big as a mountain. *There was no way for me to kill a 5-ton adult Male*, thought Pluto. *Now it is too late to get back*. In seconds he was dragged onto the bank and tramped; finally the croc received the coup dé grace to his head. That was the end of the Pluto dynasty.

\* As we recall the account of Jesus' death and his resurrection as related to the fairytale, we understand the important truth. Thus, when the death gripped Jesus' body, it didn't realize that under the vulnerable part of the human nature was a divine one. Similarly the crocodile didn't realize the object in the water was the elephant's trunk. The fairytale illustrates some ideas regarding a battle between Jesus and the angel of death. As you know, in symbolical language a crocodile represents death, and Pluto was identified with Hades. Meanwhile the Elephant represents the divine nature in Jesus. There is no one mammal as strong as an elephant. Symbolically the elephant represents a leader or a chief. So our Lord Jesus who had received the power and dominion over all creatures, had no one in the physical and spiritual realms who could compete with his majesty and glory. By his resurrection, he exposed the death and defeated the devil in his head, ( Heb 2:14) as it happened with the crocodile. This fact, when it is believed, makes us the confident servants of the Lord. Now we believe that the death has no power over the divine nature in us! Even when we'll die in the flesh, the death has no power over the new nature, that is Christ in us. Because of this occurrence, Jesus says, don't be afraid death. "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1Co 15:55). Thanks be to God alone, by his grace we became the participants of his glorious resurrection; now - spiritually, and in the end - physically.

That makes sense, doesn't it? Therefore, don't be afraid, but rejoice with the unspeakable joy.

Brothers, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you always.

Amen.