

The Joy without End.

(John 10:22-31)

* Dear Friends the times in which we are living now continue to challenge our cheerful mood with environmental disasters. After Haiti's and Chile's earthquakes the land again was shaken, in this case by a volcano eruption. It started on Wednesday, April 14. By the way, the volcano is not very far from our metropolitan area, just about half the distance between England and our country. Significantly, besides the problems related to airports being closed, we received a warning from the scientists. It seems to them that the next eruption of nearby volcano Katla is very likely due to the increased underground pressure; it could be 100 times more powerful, they said, and there is no way of knowing how long it will last. The interesting thing here is that this environmental holocaust amuses many people with the fabulous dark clouds and lightings in them. I read five comments, they speak excitedly, but only one says, *Scary!* Meanwhile the ash clouds have already made day look like night in many areas. According to some broadcast agencies, the clouds may reach North America tomorrow afternoon. Ah, I almost forget, there was a drilling rig exploded on Tuesday in the Gulf of Mexico. It also causes some environmental problems for shrimp, fish, birds and for the deep-sea divers. Friends, after hearing something like this, are you in a cheerful mood, or are you *Scared?*

* Some time ago I said that many of our church's members are veterans. Saying this, I mean that you have pretty good experiences of the Living God, and you have foreknown the end of your life in Christ Jesus. These experiences and understanding should help your mood to remain in a cheerful state despite of ecological and industrial calamities. However, because we are sinful human beings, we may be frightened and misled. That is why the Word and the Spirit reinforce our mood today by sending the message of assurance and everlasting joy. It may especially reassure those of us who were already found themselves on shaky ground. Therefore, let's pray to the Lord of our perfection for encouragement and instructions in order that our joy may abide in us with all kinds of thanks and praise.

* Here we pray, O Almighty God, You sent your beloved Son to die for us so that we may have life, and having life we may have it abundantly. Dear Lord, being rooted in your infinite grace, we thank you for the words of assurance and encouragement. We plead, grant us a joyful spirit according to your eternal provision, and bless us to be your faithful servants forever. For the sake of your most holy name, we pray, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

* Friends, today we will center on Jesus' resurrection as the fulfillment of our inner desire for the union with the ever-living Christ. Growing in this purpose, we keep on running our life with the permanent anticipation of the future resurrection. Friends, if we are not theoreticians only but practitioners as well, then we should

know that a secret of success, while people are running a long distance, is hidden in one's cheerful mood. No kidding, I am serious; even the Scripture says something similar to that. For example, after hearing the angelic news of Jesus' resurrection, the women believed and ran quickly from the empty tomb with fear and great joy, (Mat 28:8). Significantly, those women continued to run the rest of their lives with the same cheerful mood (Act 12:14), until their very end, (Jud 1:24). Friends, if you will think about these women, you may find the reason of permanent joy also for yourselves. Significantly, the lesson for today gives us such a reason; yet, I believe, it will reinforce our hope and confidence in Jesus Christ after hearing this sermon. Now let's focus on (Joh 10:22-30), the Sunday lesson, moving ahead verse by verse.

* Our text makes clear that on the Feast of the Dedication - probably the 20th of December, A.D. 29 - Jewish authorities planned to stone the Lord of our salvation. The commentary says, *the Feast of the Dedication was held in commemoration of national deliverance*. From this I concluded that the opposition plotted to deliver the people and itself from Jesus by taking on that Feast a new meaning that would be held in honor of the renovation and purification of the Temple from the Syrians and from the "False" Messiah. The verse 23 says that the Jews came round about Jesus while he was walking in Solomon's porch and questioned him. *How long will You hold us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly,* (Joh 10:24). Now let's think about that questionary as if we were in Jesus' place. Now being asked to be honest and answer plainly to the Jewish demand, wouldn't you be afraid to be accused as a blasphemer and then be put to death according Jewish law? That is scary, isn't it? However, Jesus did not deny that he is God-Man but at first, he told the Jews the words of truth. *You are not my sheep*, he said, (v.26).

Friends, have his words scared you?

* Once I was told by a Pastor that he had prayed to God almost for eight years on behalf of a person whose name, let's say, is Mike, but unsuccessfully because Mike stood firm in his unbelief. Later I met that Mike and known from him that he was not a Christian, Jew, Muslim, or anyone else. Now, supposing you are the evangelists who failed many times in trying to turn Mike's unbelief into belief. In virtue of a series of failures to convert him, your patient ran away and you searched for help from the Bible. After opening the Book at random, we received an answer. It says, *... you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, just as I said to you*, (v.26). After thinking over this verse for awhile, you praised God for His help in understanding. Now it is clear, Mike doesn't believe in Jesus because he is not his sheep! However, I would be advised to keep such a remark in secret, just between you and God because many of us don't have a prophetic eye to see Mike's final upshot. Moreover, Jesus doesn't give us the command to judge but to love, (Mat 7:1; Joh 13:35). Anyway, even we don't have a prophetic eye, we are still well enough in order to

distinguish Jesus' sheep from others by virtue of what sheep carry on their backs. But it is between you and God.

* Friends, each time when you come to this sanctuary you have a chance to see the altar- cross.

It is centered with a figure of a lamb on it. This figure refers to Jesus as the Lamb of God, the perfect and



sinless offering for sins of the world. Also, Jesus may be depicted as a lamb carried a cross that signifies his love.

It is a very famous pictogram, you know. But the interesting thing here is that by the same manner we can link the Disciples of Christ to a symbolical sheep that carries a cross. This

picture enables us to see ourselves as the sheep of the Good Shepherd (Joh 13:35) who was heard in Jesus' demand for us to take a personal cross, (Mat 10:38). Now we receive a new imagery, a sheep carrying its cross! Significantly, unlike a sheep that carries a cross, the hypocrites and troublemakers can be seen as a sheep that carries a stone. After all, by means of contrasting the two types of sheep you can make the remarkable distinguish.

For example, from the (v.31) we learned that *The Jewish leaders picked up rocks again to stone Jesus to death*. To them the Scripture links up the hard words, *you are not My sheep*, (v.26).

* Friends, being found without "stones" in our hands but with one's personal cross, we are also found among sheep of the Good Shepherd. That is certainly his voice spoken to you and to me, *My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me*, (v.27). Yes, I am sure, it is Jesus' voice, *I give them eternal life, and they will never perish; no one will snatch them from my hand*, (v.28). O Lord, I am one of your sheep, thank you! Thank you! And the voice is heard once again, *My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand*, (29). On hearing the words of Eternal Life and believing them, we are rejoicing at our salvation with great joy, (Php 4:4). Look at him, your Shepherd is God. He said and it came, *I and the Father are one*," (v.30). Indeed, he has said and he has deeded.

* From this moment, any calamity or adversary seems to me as nothingness. Our Shepherd is Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Maker of the universe. Besides, he promised to wipe away every tear from our eyes, and death shall be no more, ... nor crying nor pain anymore, ... , (Rev 21:4).

Beloved, rejoice and be cheerful, because indeed, our Lord will do these deeds.

Amen.

And the great joy of your eternal salvation be with you always.

Amen.

