

Research Centrum  
Joseph W. Mathews

ROUGH DRAFT  
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### UNSPEAKABLE JOY

I bear you witness, if you find me the right language to use that right now I am enveloped in joy unspeakable and full of glory.

I have had a tremendous lifetime since I got up this morning. My first overwhelming joy was that I beat the alarm. And that was very scintillating for me because yesterday, I did not beat the alarm. At four-thirty I came to, and with a great deal of delight over beating the alarm, got myself out of bed. I walked into the bathroom, and remembered that last night I took a shower and washed my hair. That gave me a great deal of delight, because things were going to be easier. I walked over to the closet to pick out what I would put on today. I had a problem with a blister on my foot, so I was rather pleased to put on my new shoes, which I normally am not allowed to wear with this suit. I had two shirts I thought I would like to wear, and I had a bit of delight in choosing the old one.

At that time, I noticed that one of my colleagues must have stayed up a good part of the night to run some material I requested on the Selectric Composer. I looked forward to seeing that work done all day yesterday, and there it was, slipped under my door. I rushed over without any trousers on, sat down and appreciated that material. I appreciated what it was, the way it might look, and the fact that somebody did it during the night while I was asleep. I did not ask for these things; they just happened.

I also had a great deal of fun walking downstairs. I hate anyone who rides the elevator down. I have to turn away and pretend I did not see them coming down, in order to believe that God loves them. Now you can imagine, how much sheer joy an old man who felt that way would have, in himself, walking down those steps. I know them all by heart. I know the one that has an extra one on it, and if you do not know it, it will throw you. I was saying the other day, I can remember on the sidewalks when I walked to school in Ada, Ohio, exactly where the cracks were that I used to try to stretch. I could see the one that would fit my stride and the ones where I would have to break in between. Those steps are like that. I enjoy them. Then, one of my great joys is like an ephany. It happens when I turn the last corner and see those guys on security. Some mornings they are sleeping, and that delights me. Sometimes they are reading, and I am always curious about what they are reading. Anyway, that experience is a great delight every single morning.

In the middle of the night there was a HUGE clap of thunder, like I have rarely heard in my life. It was beautiful. So, the first thing I wanted to do was to go out and see if it were raining. On the days when it rains, I am happy, really happy. It is eccentric, but I am happy.

I went out on the street, to check the rain. It was not raining, but it was delightfully misty. I saw a strange man coming down the street and I

got scared. I wanted to rush in and get the door locked before he came by. I had delight in being my old, cowardly self.

Then I heard music. Sometimes, you do not hear it. But I knew I was addressed. I went on to my cubby hole. I have a sort of ritual getting things out of my briefcase, which I enjoy. As I was doing this I heard the music again. I went back and turned it up so I could appreciate it more. I became aware that I needed to know about that music, so I went to the security desk to see if any of those on duty could recognize that music. I got a note from one of them that told me what it was. And that was a joy, a real joy.

I can go on, but none of this I am talking about in the first instance has to do with the joy unspeakable and full of glory. On the other hand, none of it is disrelated.

Inside I tingle. It is not a tingle on the outside. It is a tingle on the inside. Do you know the difference between tingling on the inside of your skin and then on the outside? You probably notice in me just a touch of what I call "wildness." Just a touch. As a matter of fact, if you knew me well, you probably would know that if you put a match under me right now, I would explode.

I left out one thing. One of our colleagues came in. If you have to live around this individual it is best that you have a place where he does not know you are. If he knows where you are, he is worse than my wife at dumping problems. Only he is not like my wife because my wife really wants to dump problems. He does not want to dump problems. He just wants to talk. Of course, it has to be a problem or he does not feel he has any right to come in and bother you. So I get the problem. Anyway, I must say I exploded. He made me extremely angry. In my loving way, I let him have it.

That never phases this character. I wish it did. The trouble is, he will be back. If you could just offend him enough where he would not come back, it would be great. But you cannot. So you have to just go on losing your temper with him. Constantly.

Anyway, he came close to putting that match under me. As a matter of fact the match probably was under me a little, because he got an explosion. But, as a matter of fact, even that I find delightful.

Now, let us go to joy unspeakable. I thought, not long since, that this would be the easiest one. In one sense it is. But I find it the most difficult to communicate. I suppose long before you and I knew what they meant, those words, "unspeakable" and "full of joy" intrigued us. I never saw Dr. Strangelove. I was always afraid to see it. But that title has been going through my mind as I think of the word "unspeakable." Because this joy is a strange joy. It knows nothing about darkness and nothing about light. It knows nothing about day and nothing about night. It just is.

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You become aware of the fact, in the midst of this experience, that you are making a decision. But, it is the kind of a decision that you are not making. It is that kind of a decision in which you feel "decided" rather than your deciding. You have "been decided." It is your decision, but you have been decided. I noticed in one of those frames on holiness from The Saint, the man says that for the saint, freedom and necessity become awfully vague. This is true. That is what I am trying to convey now. It is as if you were decided. And once you are decided, your life is joy. There is no such thing as joy except your life. There is no such thing as a hunk of joy out there and then there is your life. Your life is your joy, or you have no joy.

The implication of this is rather shocking. It first came to me somewhat objectively, in that I saw that you had to decide that happiness did not define you, but rather you define happiness. Now, on the inside, you experience this same thing. You literally experience your life as joy.

Yet, it is not quite that way. You think that joy is over here but it is of no substance. I think of it as a ghost, or a ghostly cape that is able to walk in and clothe your life. Or it is a ghost that gets inside of your life and your life clothes that ghost. You sense it coming, so to speak. You sense it enveloping your life. But there is absolutely no content to joy except your life. That is why the joy which is strange, this strange joy, this unspeakable joy, knows nothing about night or day.

My day today has been a "day day." Some of my days are "night days." I remember the first night that I was in the Religious House at Teeside, after I got word that John was killed. I was aware and humiliated that there was enveloping me a kind of joy beyond description. I was humiliated. I was embarrassed. I was guilty. I was hating myself. And yet, that is literally what happened. It took me months to discover. It had nothing to do with John's death. Except, John's death was my life. I was having to be decided to be a two-boy man in history. Joy. Pain. It is like showers of blessings were in that which no one but a mad man could grasp as anything like a blessing.

This is a strange joy. It knows nothing about temporal definitions of happiness. Your mind tells you that anyone knows joy, or can know joy. I mean strange joy. Therefore, you know that joy is not synonymous with your life. But, it has only to do with your life and your life as it is. When you go lay down when something happens to one of your boys, you live a lie. When I lay down when life is not working the way I believe God ought to work it, or collapse when I have caught myself in irrational anger, or catch myself as a moral failure, I live a lie. These things have nothing to do with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

I would like to believe that I could ceaselessly call forth, "Come, Holy Spirit, Come strange joy. Come strange joy. Envelope my life." Joy is always subject to beck and call, in the sense that if on this day I

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am not strange joy, I am not strange joy, I have naught to blame save me. But strange joy is also beyond me. It comes when one least expects it. One would have to be a deeply disciplined person to be able to cry out in the midst of the death of a son, "Come strange joy." I believe there are those so disciplined. Strange joy seems to have a reality of its own that is not dissolvable into the decision-making process you and I are capable of dissolving ourselves in.

What I am talking about points to the fact that if I hate to grow old, there is no possibility of experiencing strange joy. If I am in the women's lib movement, it is impossible to know strange joy. If I cannot stand being a sixteen-year-old with pimples, then strange joy I know not.

The second part of strange joy is "doxa", "full of glory." What I have inside is wildness. In this joy there is always wildness. The wildness, it seems to me, shows forth in one or another degree of euphoria. Or one degree or another of unbelievably deep sorrow. They say of Ignatius, especially as he got older, when he would do mass, tears would stream down his face an hour at a time. Tears. It used to irritate people, disturb them. They wondered what the great tragedy of his life was. The great tragedy of his life was this wildness, the joy of "doxa," of glory and awe. With this strange joy comes wild awe. It is mixed, of course, with unbelievable delight, undefineable delight, and overwhelming dread.

I wish I had known about that euphoria when John died. I do not cry very much, except in dark theaters. I cried. I knew it was not over John. It was not the tragedy. You dismiss this euphoria, you men of the ways of the world, as neuroses. I keep wondering how many who did not know what was happening to them got in the hands of people who started dealing with their psyche. I saw some of that this summer. Or, you dismiss it in terms of the Holy Rollers and speaking in tongues. Even to me these are grotesque manifestations. I know there is phoniness in many. But there is something beyond phoniness which your life is confronted with. It is uncontrollable euphoria about your life. About life.

I have a little game. The Winter is coming so you cannot do it so much anymore because we have long sleeves on. Sometime go and put your hand on the fleshy part of someone's arm. Just hold it. You will not believe what begins to happen to you. You can do it even on your own arm. Life! For either the deep joyful sorrow or the high sad euphoria, fascination, and the equally present dread. When you get right down to the bottom of all life there is nothing except awe: the dread and fascination of all states of being that are shaped and formed out of nought but God. This is the other world which is present in this world and present simply not to the aristocratic few but to every man.