

## **HOLY HUMOR**

### **Acts 5:27-32; John 20:19-31**

The idea of setting aside one Sunday each year to celebrate God's gift of laughter and joy may be new to some of you, but it has a long and rich history in many congregations around the world. Known as *Holy Humour Sunday*, *Hilarity Sunday*, *God's Laughter Sunday*, *Bright Sunday* or *Holy Fools Sunday* the tradition has its roots in a number of different Christian traditions. In the early church it was the custom to celebrate Easter with great parties and joke-telling for the week following Easter. However, as the world evolved and the secular world became more dominant, that week gradually reduced to Easter Monday. For centuries, in Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant countries, Easter Monday and "Bright Sunday" (the Sunday after Easter) were observed by the faithful as "days of joy and laughter" with parties and picnics to celebrate Jesus' resurrection. Parishioners and pastors played practical jokes on each other, drenched each other with water, sang, and danced. It was a time for clergy and people to tell jokes and to have fun.

Churches in 15<sup>th</sup> century Bavaria used to celebrate the Sunday after Easter as *Risus Paschalis* ('God's Joke,' or 'the Easter laugh'). Priests would deliberately include amusing stories and jokes in their sermons in an attempt to make the faithful laugh. After the service, people would gather together to play practical jokes on one another and tell funny stories. It was their way of celebrating the resurrection of Christ – the supreme joke God played on Satan by raising Jesus from the dead.

Today, I hope you enjoy a few laughs as we continue to celebrate God's ultimate joke. Laughter is good for the soul. Many theologians have spoken about the need and usefulness of humor. Augustine of Hippo said, "*The Christian should be an alleluia from head to foot.*" *Juliana of Norwich* said, "*The fullness of joy is to behold God in everything.*" And, from *Martin Luther* we hear, "*If you're not allowed to laugh in heaven, I don't want to go there.*" And he advised, "*You have as much laughter as you have faith.*" So - sit back and laugh aloud as we continue the celebration of God's triumph over sin and death.

First, there are some real oddities in our language. Have you ever noticed there is no ham in hamburger? There is neither pine nor apple in pineapple? And there is no egg in eggplant?

And what about this: The English muffin was not invented in England.

French fries were not found in France. Boxing rings are square, and a guenie pig is neither from the country of Gueanie nor is it a pig.

And what about these: If writers write, then why don't fingers fing? If the plural of tooth is teeth, shouldn't the plural of phone booth be phone beeth? If the teacher taught, why didn't the preacherh praught?

Or figure this out: Why do people recite at a play and play at a recital? Or, you park on driveways and drive on parkways.

And you might be a redneck IF:

- The call to Worship is "Ya'll come on in here now!"
- People grumble about why Noah let coyotes on the arch?
- The preacher says I'd like to ask Bubba to take the offering and 6 people come forward.
- Opening day of deer season is a church holiday and services are canceled.
- A member requests to be buried in his four wheel drive pick up because; "I have never been in a hole I could not get out of."
- The only time people lock their car doors in the church parking lot is summer...so that Neighbors cannot leave a bag of squash in the car.
- When the high notes on the organ set the dogs in the parking lot to howling.
- People wonder when Jesus fed the 5000 if the two fish were bass or catfish.
- The final words of the benediction are "Ya'll come back now, ya hear."

From the mouths of our children:

*A small boy told a Sunday school teacher: "When you die, God takes care of you like your parents did when you were alive — only God doesn't yell at you all the time."*

*A little girl asked the choir director: "What music was invented on the first Easter?" "I don't know. What music was invented on the first Easter?" "Rock and Roll of course!"*

*A pastor was speaking to a group of second-graders about the resurrection of Jesus when one student asked, "What did Jesus say right after He came out of the grave?" The pastor explained that the Gospels do not tell us what He said. The hand of one little girl shot up. "I know what He said: He said, 'Tah-dah!'"*

*Seen on the sign outside a church in South Dakota: "We welcome all denominations — \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100."*

*And sometimes the joke is close to the truth: Blooper in a church bulletin: "The church had a going-away party for the Pastor. The congregation was anxious to give him a little momentum."*

*From the Dalton (GA) Daily Citizen News: "John Smith, ordained as a deamon, will pastor two churches in Fannin County."*

And finally:

*A man had been shipwrecked on a remote island in the Pacific, and was alone for 20 years. When a ship finally arrived, his rescuers were impressed with the three buildings he had built and asked him about them.*

*"Well," the man replied, "this is my house, and that building over there is my church. It's a wonderful church and I hate to leave it."*

*"And what is the third building yonder?" a rescuer asked.*

*"Oh, that is the church I used to go to," the man replied.*

Three pastors met privately to share their major weaknesses and to pray for one another. The first pastor confessed that he had a serious lust problem and many times found himself in compromising situations. The second pastor, encouraged by this display of candor, admitted that he had stolen money from the church and needed help in managing his finances. The third pastor then said, "My weakness is gossip and I can hardly wait to get out of here!"

The Pope was in Washington, DC for some important meetings. A limousine came by the hotel to pick up the pontiff and take him throughout town. This was the first time the Pope ever rode in a limousine. So he had fun playing with the phone and checking out the refrigerator. Eventually the pope thought it would be fun to drive the limousine. So His Holiness called the driver asking him if he could do so. At first the driver refused because it was his job. Then the driver thought, Why not? He's the Pope...No harm should come from him being behind the wheel. So he pulled the limo over to the side of the road and the two men switched places.

At first the Pope was driving okay but eventually got carried away as he drove through a few red lights and was speeding. Finally a cop pulled him over. When he came up to the Pope sitting in the driver's seat, the cop asked for his license. After the cop looked it over, he said with a concerned look on his face, Wait here, just a moment! The cop went back to his squad car and got on the police radio saying, "Get me the commissioner QUICK! When the commissioner responded on the horn, the cop said, "Sir, I've got a big one this time."

"All right!" said the commissioner. "Who did you pull over this time? A senator?" "Higher," replied the cop.

"The vice-president?" "Higher!"

"You mean you pulled over the President?" "Higher!"

"Well, who could be higher than the President?"

"Well, sir I think it's God; he's got the Pope as His chauffer."

A pastor and a New York City cab driver happened to die at the exact same time and stood in line next to each other at the Pearly Gates. St. Peter motioned the cab driver to come forward first and reviewed his life. The cab driver was given a nice robe to wear and then a video screen

showed a huge mansion that he would be living in. The pastor said to himself, "If that shabby cabby is getting those fine things, then I must be getting something really great!"

But after St. Peter reviewed the life of the pastor, the video screen showed a small shack that would be the pastor's heavenly home. Dumbfounded, the pastor asked St. Peter, "How come that cab driver gets a beautiful robe and mansion while I'm stuck with that small shack?"

St. Peter answered, "That's simple. Your sermons put people to sleep. The cabby's driving put people on their knees praying."

And so, on this First Sunday after Easter, I call on all of you – the beloved community – to believe – to view the world as Easter people. Death is not the victor. The grave is empty. The butterflies have burst forth from the cocoons that bound them. The chains that bind us to this world are no longer. As Easter people, we can laugh because the love of God has overcome the hatred and pain of this world. And, in the words of Theologian Jorgen Moltmann: *God weeps with us on Good Friday so that we may laugh with Him after Easter.*" Amen.