



A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

12 April 2017, 7:05 PM

The 'evolutionary leap' introduced by Jesus

Happy Easter! Hearing the Passion Narrative read twice during Holy Week, and having the story strikingly celebrated in the Church's liturgy, makes you think: Jesus could have avoided suffering and death; he is God after all. But Jesus did not avoid it; in fact, he made it clear that it was precisely for this that he came. Jesus could have avoided suffering and death, but did not, in order to redeem us from the slavery of sin and death, and to manifest the resurrection.

The resurrection of Jesus is different than what happened to Lazarus. He was brought back to bodily life, with the prospect of dying again. The resurrection of Jesus, on the other hand, introduced what one author called an evolutionary leap: a radical development, substantial change, living on a new plane.

For the sake of argument, let's assume that humans made Darwin's evolutionary leap: one day walking out of the jungle, greeting each other with a howdy-doo, and beginning to live differently than their former simian companions.

The evolutionary leap introduced by Jesus is no less radical. The risen life Jesus introduced by his resurrection is not ended by death, and it begins even before death, with a life lived on a higher plane than mere bodily life and appetites.

Those who trust in the promises of Jesus and are baptized share in this evolutionary leap. They begin to live risen life now, a life notably different than others who remain behind in the jungle, so to speak.

The difference flows from beginning to live now, here, as if already perfectly united with God in heaven – to live without fear of death, and to show ourselves to be children of God by a resemblance to the Divine mind and heart.

The Letter to the Hebrews describes Jesus as the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being (1:3). The followers of Jesus are challenged to do the same.

And what is the Divine mind and heart? In the Book of Exodus, Moses records his experience of the glory of God's very being: merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness (34:6-7).

And so we manifest the fact that we share in risen life, that we have made this evolutionary leap, by living differently according to God's very being, beginning now. Merciful and gracious. Slow to anger and abounding in kindness. To care about, give to, share with, help out, live for, even die so others can be happy here and in the hereafter. And doing this, as Jesus did, in spite of who the

beneficiaries are, or whether they are judged deserving, or if they asked nicely, or if they are aware of the cost to me, or if they are grateful.

Let's walk out of the jungle. Let's greet each other with an Easter howdy-doo. Let's begin to live differently, a risen life, and make the world different on that account.

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