



Holy Guardian Angels Parish

“Since, therefore, [disciples] share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that *through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death.*” (Heb, 2:14-15)

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews was insistent that Jesus was as fully human as we are. Several centuries later Pope St. Leo the Great echoed that idea to the point that he declared that anyone who denied Jesus was fully human was a heretic! It is part of our profession of faith: *he was born of the Virgin Mary and became human.*

Why this insistence on Jesus being just as human as we are? The reason was to make sure we got the point that Jesus *was* as human as you and me. If we don't have that as a basis for our approach to Jesus, we might not get the core of Jesus' teaching: life is more than cradle to grave. That's what Easter is all about: human life never ends, it just changes.

All of us are afraid of death. Researchers count fear of death as the #1 fear of all humans. We don't want to lose life; we want to continue living. Threatened by death we will do almost anything to avoid it. Even our efforts to look young shows our attempt to push death away. Despite this fear of dying, everything in our make-up cries out for life beyond the grave. Still, the reality of a coffin lowered into the ground says otherwise. There is no proof of life after death and that rattles our hope in eternal life.

Jesus himself was afraid of death. We heard this just last Sunday in St. Mark's Passion account: *Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me...* (Mk 14: 36) He begged the Father for a plan B - “take this cup away from me.” And he got the same answer we get when we ask God why - silence. God doesn't answer why questions. He expects trust, which Jesus had: *yet not what I want, but what you want.*

We had to be convinced that Jesus faced death just like we do and die just like we do. That's the reason for the Passion and the 3 days in the tomb. No human being could possibly endure all Jesus went through with the scourging, crucifixion and a spear being plunged into his side and survive. We had to be sure Jesus was dead.

Once we accept that Jesus was really human and, just like us (died and was buried) then we are ready for the resurrection.

When Jesus walked out of that tomb, he was the same person whom people had seen and heard throughout Judea and Galilee. But he no longer belonged here. When he appeared to Mary Magdalene and the women who went to the tomb and the Apostles in the Upper Room, he never stayed with them like he did before. He appeared, said what he had to say and then *disappeared*. Where did he go? Why didn't he hang around with his family and friends? Because he no longer belonged in this stage of life. He proved that he no longer belonged here by leaving once and for all on the day we call the Ascension.

The Father had to prove to us that his Son was just like us, a human being, so we would be able to understand that death was not the end of human life, but only a change in how we live it. The Father didn't want us to slip into thinking "well, of course he didn't really die. He was the Son of God so he can't die." God wanted us to learn that the hope of eternal life engrained in us is real, is correct. Made in the image and likeness of God, we are made to live forever. That's what we celebrate today. By God's grace, despite the sins of humanity, we will live forever! We no longer need to fear death.

So, celebrate life today! Enjoy the beauty of Nature, family and friends. We are alive...and will be forever. Happy Easter!

Fr. Denis