

I'm a Monkey's Nephew
Rev. Tony Lorenzen
Intergenerational Service Homily
Pathways Church
Southlake, TX
February 14, 2010

My family history goes back 14 billion years. All the way back to ever since. Back to the start of, well to the start of all things. "I am stardust, I am golden of the sun, billion year old carbon," related to single cell creatures that floated and then fish that swam and crawled out of the sea. My distant relations were lizards and reptiles and also birds. The old saying is wrong - I am not a monkey's uncle, but he is mine. I am a monkey's nephew. And I'm just fine with that. And the birds, the fish, and the gorilla and the monkey are also my brothers and sisters and this amazing journey, the greatest story ever told. The evolutionary epic goes on, and you and I get to add to the family history. It's mystical, sacred, and at it's core – religious.

Today, along with congregations all over the country we celebrate Evolution Sunday – lifting up the science of evolution. Defending it from those who would dismiss it, and yet at the same

time protecting it from those who would make of it an idol. My colleague, Rob Hardies, the minister of our UU Church at All Souls in Washington D.C. says it's easy to spot idolatry. "You know someone is into idolatry," Rev. Hardies says, "When their God hates all the same people you do."

I'm tired of people who dismiss, who practice idolatry, who broker no opinion but their own. These people are called fundamentalists. Fundamentalism never leads to wholeness, but seeks to separate and divide and hold up its truth as the only truth, its light as the only light, its way as the only way. I have tolerance for much, but not intolerance, and liberals, even religious liberals, can be just as intolerant as the next person or the next religion. I'm no holier than the next, even the most well intentioned of us can fall into fundamentalism or fundamentalist behavior.

Evolution Sunday is a day, even a weekend, because there are synagogues and mosques celebrating this week as well, to welcome and lift up all who recognize the rightful place of the science of

evolution and marvel at its information and knowledge, but also its awe inspiring sweep and splendor.

I don't believe in evolution, because it just is. Just as I don't believe in gravity or Bernoulli's Law of Fluid Dynamics or Dalton's Law of Partial Pressures, because they just are.

I also don't believe in God, because for me God also just is. I like Forrest Church's definition of God. God is that which is greater than all and yet within each. I like this definition of God because it's big enough for everyone who has a personal God and I don't need to think of them in a demeaning way and yet it's also big enough for me to think about things like the extraordinary sweep and scope and majesty of the universe we live in and its evolutionary process and see the divine it in and fit God into that too because that evolutionary process is certainly greater than all and yet it is within me, within all of us, within everything, within each.

Evolution Sunday is an invitation to the wonder of existence; an invitation to a family reunion of Science and the Holy Spirit, and the Human Spirit.

Let's use this Evolution Sunday as a reminder to leave behind all fundamentalisms at the door of our family reunion. There is a danger, surely, in taking religious texts such as the Bible literally and it is wrong to teach any culture's creation story as a scientific explanation for the creation of the universe. It's even worse to legislate this in a public school. The Bible, however, is not, as Bill Maher derogatorily calls it, The Book of Jewish Fairy Tales. It still contains valuable insights into the human spirit (for both good and ill), valuable stories and parables for community and religious life and we dismiss it out of hand out of ignorance, bias and prejudice.

We're all family here in the great sweep of the great story. You, me, the star stuff, the bird, the fish, my uncle the gorilla and my aunt the monkey, science and the human spirit. Aba Daba.