

Eucharist as Memorial

by Dr. Tamra Fromm

A few summers ago, my husband and I traveled to Conneaut, Ohio to witness one of the largest annual D-Day reenactments. As the amphibious vehicles rolled up the bluffs off Lake Erie and planes dropped mock bombs, we experienced the battle as if we were actually there.

Whether it's an actual re-enactment or a remembrance, these kinds of events serve as a means of memory or as a memorial for us.

Memory helps us transcend space and time. When I remember something, I bring an event from the past into the present. I establish a continuity between the past and present but also into the future. And when I share a memory with another person, it has the power to unite and bind us. We discover something about who we are and what we value.

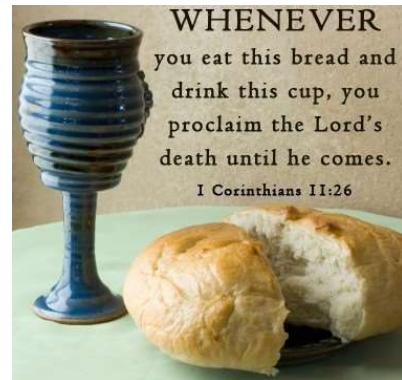
Think about it ... recall something from your childhood or adult life. Perhaps the day you graduated from high school, or when you got married, or had your first child. Almost like being there again, right?

One way of thinking about the Eucharist is as memorial. In the Eucharistic prayer during the *anamnesis* (memorial), we remember Christ's passion, death, resurrection, and ascension. This fulfills Jesus' command through St. Paul to "do this in remembrance of me" (I Corinthians 11:24-25).

In Exodus 12:14, God gives a similar command to the Hebrew people when the Passover is instituted: "This day shall be a memorial (*zikkaron*) to you." The Hebrew word *zikkaron* (memorial) comes from the word *zakar*, meaning "to remember." More than a quick pause in our daily stream of thoughts, *zakar/zikkaron* suggests a conscious reviewing of something that happened in the past. Thus, the Jewish celebration of Passover was intended to be a conscience and active remembrance of how God saved his chosen people from slavery in Egypt.

There's one key difference between how we remember at an event like Conneaut or even the Passover and the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, we do not re-enact what Jesus did. Rather it is re-presented. "Re-present" means to make something present again. To make something that was real in the past real again in present time.

As Hebrews 7:27, 9:28, and 10:12 affirm, Jesus' death on Calvary happened once in time. This means that the Eucharist is not a re-sacrifice of what happened on Calvary. That event took place



WHENEVER
you eat this bread and
drink this cup, you
proclaim the Lord's
death until he comes.

I Corinthians 11:26

once in space and time. Just like the actual D-Day invasion happened on June 6, 1944. But the offering of Jesus' body and blood happens continually in Heaven, outside of space and time.

Thus, the Eucharist becomes a bridge between the earthly liturgy and the heavenly liturgy. We become united with the entire Mystical Body of Christ. We affirm our identity as sons and daughters of the Father and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

As the song goes, "We remember how you loved us 'til your death. And still we celebrate for You are with us here. And we believe that we shall see you when you come in your glory, Lord. We remember. We celebrate. We believe."

