

Father Philip's Address to St Paul's Assembly

Monday 7th November 2013

Theme for the week: Remembrance

Do this in memory of me

2 Timothy 2 8-13

'Remember Jesus Christ' – our first words from our reading this morning.
'Remember Jesus Christ'.

As you heard on Monday from Dr Kennard, we have a theme of 'Remembrance' for our assemblies this week, because November is a month of remembering.

Last week on Friday, which was the first of November, we remembered all the Saints. As we sang in our hymn on Friday "For all the saints, who from their labours rest ... thy name, O Jesus, be for ever blest".

On Saturday the Church celebrated another important day. All Souls' Day. On that day we remember in Church all who have died. Family, friends and the many people we do not know. Just like All Saints' Day is a day to give thanks for the Saints we have never heard about, All Souls' Day is a day to give thanks for all who have died, especially those who have nobody to remember them.

Throughout all of November in the Church we remember all those who have died and who we have known. In the Northern Hemisphere it is now the season of Autumn, the leaves are starting to die and fall off the trees. But we know that there will be new life in Spring. In the same way at this time of year we remember those who have died, in the knowledge that Jesus has risen from the dead and that the news of Easter will bring the message of new life.

On Monday it will be the 11th of November. In many places around the world that is also a special day of remembrance. Because it was on that day at 11 o'clock in 1918 that the First World War ended: the 11th hour, of the 11th day of the 11th Month. It is known as Armistice Day or Remembrance Day and some people wear a red poppy in remembrance of all who have died in wars around the world.



A month of remembering, a month of giving thanks for those who have died and for their life and their love.

The Christian faith is one which reminds us that we do not remember without hope. Yesterday in our reading we heard these words:

“If we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him”.¹

We remember with hope in new life through Jesus Christ.

In our Christian worship we have the most important act of Remembering in the Eucharist. In it, we follow the command of Jesus who took bread and wine, gave it to his disciples and said “This is my body,” “This is my blood”. He then instructed them to do this in memory or remembrance of him.

The Eucharist can be celebrated in many and different ways – simply or with great ceremony. It may be celebrated simply by an Army Chaplain near a battlefield. It may be celebrated simply and quietly by the bedside of someone who is sick in hospital. It is celebrated in prisons and also celebrated with much colour and symbolism in a Cathedral such as St John’s.

¹ Romans 6:8



And of course it is celebrated in our own Chapel on a Tuesday at 1.00 pm and on a Thursday, today, at 3.45 pm after school.

Wherever and however it is celebrated, the remembrance we do in the Eucharist is much more than sitting back and thinking about something that happened in the past – it is an active remembering. In fact, the word “Remember” really means “to put back together”. To return to how something was. To put back together something which has been “dismembered”. Something which has been taken apart.

When I look at a photograph it may cause me to think back to an earlier time, but it doesn't make it come back.



This photograph is not the first photograph ever taken – but it is the first photograph of a person. It was taken by a Frenchman in Paris – Louis Daguerre. When he took the photograph there would have been lots of people walking through the street. But because it needed such a long exposure time, about ten minutes, none of them appear in the photograph. Except for two people, a man having his shoes cleaned and a shoe-shine boy. Both of them will have been standing still for long enough to have appeared in this picture, and unknown to them became a bit of history!

It is an amazing picture. Today when people are taking “selfies” all the time and putting them online – we can see this picture and recall a time that no person had ever been photographed.

This photo makes us think, but it does not bring back the boy or the man. We may think about them, but they remain in history.

After the photograph Dr Kennard showed us on Monday of him in the snow, I can't resist showing this next one of me on my first day of school at Kowloon Junior School.



When I look at that picture, it fills my mind with so many thoughts of the day, and how I felt that day going to school for the first time. But it doesn't make that day present, it remains in history.

But when Jesus said those words over the bread and wine “Do this in memory” or “Do this in remembrance of me” – the word which we translate as “memory” or “remembrance” in the original Greek is:

Anamnesis - ἀνάμνησις

It is a very difficult word to translate. But it doesn't mean just ‘thinking’ about something that happened in the past. It means to make real, to make present today. To make what happened in the past happen among us now.

So when Jesus said “do this in memory of me” – “do this in ἀνάμνησις of me” he is asking us to be actively involved and enter into his saving work. In the Eucharist Jesus is truly present among us in his word and sacrament. We are not simply recalling an event in history and thinking nice thoughts about him, we are putting back together something which has been dismembered, we are making real the presence of Jesus among us.

As we heard in our reading today “Remember Jesus”. Allow him to be a real and present part of your life, not just a part of history which you may think about and be inspired apart. Make him alive and active in your mind, heart and actions this day.

“Remember Jesus”.

