

[Isaiah 43:16-21](#)

[Psalm 126](#)

[Philippians 3:4b-14](#)

[John 12:1-8](#)

A SERMON PREACHED BY THE REVEREND ALISTAIR SO, S.O.SC., RECTOR OF ALL HALLOWS PARISH, SOUTH RIVER, IN DAVIDSONVILLE, MARYLAND, ON THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT, MARCH 17, 2013, AT ALL HALLOWS CHAPEL AND THE BRICK CHURCH

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Holidays and other important dates on the calendar are markers that give structure and meaning to the passing of the year. We memorialize certain days of the year in our personal lives, be it a wedding anniversary, a child's birthday, the death of a parent, graduation, retirement, so and so forth. Nationally, certain dates just create different sentiments in our psyche, such as Independence Day or September 11.

For some occasions, we wish to savor the sweet memories. Other occasions are marked by memories that may be bitter and painful, while still others may blend sadness and joy.

For personal milestones, we want to mark certain achievements and rites of passage in our lives. It seems that all these commemorations have something to do with the limited amount of time that we have here on earth.

We can make sense of the precious amount of time we have by remembering, celebrating and honoring events that demarcate the different parts of our lives. Our remembrance and celebrations help form the narratives of our lives. Our commemorations denote our beliefs and our values.

It should come as no surprise, then, that our Church Calendar was created for similar reasons. We remember, celebrate and commemorate a wide range of different events in the course of the Church Calendar year.

A quick look at our All Hallows Ordo Calendar will show us numerous feasts days, distributed throughout the year, some well-known to us, and some more obscure. The Calendar is the story of the church.

In our Calendar, we find the milestones of our salvation history, such as the major events Jesus' life: his birth, baptism, ministry, passion and death, resurrection and ascension.

We also have feast days that celebrate theological concepts, such as Trinity Sunday, the Pentecost event, and Good Shepherd Sunday, and others.

So, in both our secular and spiritual lives, we remember, we celebrate, we commemorate. We remember, we celebrate, we commemorate because we know that we will never have the same moment, event, and time again. Jesus said in today's Gospel lesson, "*You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.*" - *But you do not always have me.*

This timeless statement uttered by Christ in today's Gospel speaks to that very human sentiment: what we have today, we may not have tomorrow. We cannot relive or rewrite history. But we can remember history. Truly, it is by remembering and commemorating that we become human. No other creatures created by God remember and commemorate quite the way we do.

In the part of the Eucharistic Prayer formally called the "Dominical Words," Jesus commanded us that whenever we break bread or share the cup in the Eucharistic commemoration, we ought to "Do this in remembrance of him". There is another layer of meaning to the Eucharist. And that is the sacrificial nature of our commemoration. Through the ages the mystical teaching of the Church has been that all Eucharists are one and the same, in that they all join with the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. So, at each Eucharist, there is a sense that we are transposed to the scene on Calvary. It is not an re-enactment or re-sacrifice per se, but a remembrance so vivid that we are taken out of our elements to a different realm, which is the source of our salvation. This is called the "atonement," which actually comes from the contraction of "at one moment." And that refers to the eternal presence of the sacrifice on Calvary in the Eucharist.

The Protestant reformers fought fiercely about this sacrificial aspect of the Holy Eucharist. Some of them misunderstood this concept of the atonement at each and every Eucharist. They asserted that this type of theology gave too much power to the priest in that he could sacrifice Christ at each and every mass.

But the long and short of it really is that the Eucharist is "anamnesis" - the Eucharist is "remembrance." But it's a very special type of remembrance. It is not simply a thought or image that resurfaces in our heads whenever we gather for corporate worship. Rather, the "remembrance" at the Eucharist is a crystallized form of our salvation. The Eucharist calls us to remember and celebrate. And it also calls us to partake and participate, not only in the here and now, but in the eternal. The Eucharist is a call for us to participate in the eternal. That's what makes Eucharist so special and central to our faith and practice.

A remembrance that inspires us and invites us to participate in the eternal. A commemoration that connects us with the all the faithful past, present and to come. A celebration that mirrors the joys and bliss of heaven. That is the Eucharist.

Next Sunday is Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week. We will liturgically begin the journey of the remembrance of our salvation history. We will liturgically begin the story that gives us the reason to celebrate the Eucharist week after week. We will accompany Christ as he enters Jerusalem in great humility and triumph, on a donkey. We will also experience the darker side of human nature as we witness and participate in rejecting and condemning Christ to die on the cross, through the Service of Tenebrae - a scriptural and musical commemoration, on Monday of Holy Week; and we will follow the Lord's command to love one another on Maundy Thursday with foot-washing, the Last Supper and the Institution of the Holy Eucharist. Some of us will remain and pray through the night at the Altar of Repose, responding to the Lord's plea, "Can't you watch with me for one hour?" Then, on Good Friday, we will walk the Via Dolorosa, the Way of Sorrow, as Christ walks to Golgotha. At noon, we will commemorate the death of Christ in the Mass of the Presanctified. It is called the presanctified because traditionally, we will only receive communion in one kind - just the bread - consecrated from Maundy Thursday and reserved on the Altar of Repose.

On Holy Saturday, we will have the service of the Proanaphora, which is a very truncated service as we will end by the Nicene Creed without communion, symbolizing Christ's dormition in the tomb. But even so, we will begin to see signs of life, as the Altar Guild will begin their work in earnest and start decorating our churches for Easter.

On Easter Day, we will proclaim "Christ is risen" with joy and praise, holding fast to the reason of our remembrance activities all along, holding tight to the very event that gave us the hope that while we cannot recreate the past, we can have hope in the future; we can have hope in the eternal.

My brothers and sisters, in all that we do and all that we are, may God help us to proclaim:

We remember.

We celebrate.

We believe.

Amen.