

“Do this in remembrance of me.” Paul recounts for the Corinthians this line from Jesus’s last supper with his disciples. Words we say each Sunday during the Eucharistic feast, in remembrance of Jesus’s death and resurrection. Remembrance—and memories—are a sacred part of our lives.

My father turns 80 in a few weeks. I’ve taken up the task of creating a memory book for him. I asked my siblings and stepmom to send me favorite photos. The exercise is taking me down a memory lane of my own: a reliving of vacations and birthday parties, of weddings and baptisms, along with small but remarkable moments from across the years: my Dad driving his six grandchildren around on a lawn tractor; helping 4-year-old-me go through my Easter basket; making a goofy face for the camera.

At their best, memories not only help take us back to joyful times; they serve as the medium for us recreate the emotions we felt in those moments. St. Augustine of Hippo, an early Church father and a leading figure in the secular study of memory, “is credited with establishing memory as the inner source of selfhood and locus of the search for God.”¹

Augustine said, “...there are three times: a time present of things past; a time present of things present; and a time present of things future. For these three do coexist somehow in the soul...”² His book “Confessions” speaks to reconstructing the past and anticipating the future as a kind of ability to travel in mental time, “thought to be at the heart of consciousness and...the center of human cognition.”³

¹ [Augustine on Memory | Oxford Academic \(oup.com\)](#)

² St. Augustine [1], Book 11, Chapter 20, Heading 26.

³ [St. Augustine’s Reflections on Memory and Time and the Current Concept of Subjective Time in Mental Time Travel - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

In Remembrance
The Rev. Denise Schiavone

This week, we embark on a sort of mental time travel, where past, present, and future do somehow coexist in our souls. On Sunday, we reenacted the Passion of our Lord. And though we may know the story well, hopefully we sensed anew the weight of our part in this tale, echoed in the people's cry: "Crucify him!" "Crucify him!" Now, we find ourselves at the start of the Triduum: the three holy days of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection. Tonight, John takes us back to the period before Jesus's arrest, to the setting of the Upper Room.

The scene itself is one left to imagination: The disciples make it to Jerusalem, wading through crowds of people streaming in from hundreds of miles away to celebrate Passover. The group somehow finds a safe, warm place to stay. At supper, Jesus reclines at a long table alongside his closest friends. The flicker of lamplight casts shadows on the walls. Soft conversation hums throughout the chambers.

The event evokes our collective memory of the traditional Jewish Passover feast, as recalled in our reading from Exodus, as we experienced in the Seder Feast before this service: lamb and unleavened bread and bitter herbs. We become part of the story of God's command to Moses and Aaron: "This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance."

A day of remembrance.

I wonder, how did the disciples remember this Maundy Thursday? Did they fixate on Jesus's revelation that one of them—someone in that very room—would betray him? Did they recall the towel and basin, their beloved Teacher stooping to wash their feet? Did they regret their hesitation to be cleansed,

Peter proclaiming, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Peter, who sees Jesus not as a servant, but as the exalted King of Israel.

Did the disciples think back to how they failed their long-awaited Messiah soon after this night? Judas already fallen to the temptation of 30 pieces of silver, John and James unable to stay awake and keep watch in the garden, Peter’s repeated denials following Jesus’s arrest.

Or, did they focus on other memories? The sharing of an agape meal—a feast of love. The sensation of sitting shoulder-to-shoulder. The sound of water splashing into a pitcher. The soft glow of light. Their Lord addressing them as “Little Children.” A scene of deep intimacy and connection.

We can only wonder about such things, but we can know for certain what John’s Gospel tells us: As he spends this evening sequestered in the Upper Room, Jesus *knows* what’s coming. John says, “[He] knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father.” Jesus knew the suffering that lies ahead. And yet, he devotes his time and energies to his disciples—his friends. He teaches, he serves, he cleanses. Despite any fears or sense of foreboding, he offers them nothing less than the gift of his presence.

Even as he draws nearer to a brutally painful death, Jesus leaves his disciples with a new commandment. Maundy, meaning mandate: “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

We may think we know the Maundy Thursday story well. But every time we hear it, we should hear it anew. We should allow the story to shake us loose from

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our assumptions and set beliefs—and immerse ourselves afresh in this journey with Jesus to the cross.

Tonight, Jesus welcomes us *all* to be part of this story. If you have memories of ever feeling rejected or shut out, here is a different memory—one we relive together, in remembrance, a seat for each and every one of us at the table. Bruised, battered, and calloused, we come to feed and be fed, to wash and be washed, to experience the healing power of God's grace and love. Tonight, we all belong.

Of the notion of remembrance, Theologian Frederick Buechner said, "When you remember me it means you carry something of who I am with you. That I have left some mark of who I am on who you are."

In a world where loneliness and isolation withers souls and corrupts communities, where hatred and violence destroy, this is the role of the Church. As disciples of Christ, we carry Jesus in our collective memory, the thousands of years of memories before us, the present moment, and the anticipation of the future glory of God's Kingdom, to help reconcile a broken Creation.

If you were a stranger who happened to pick tonight's service for your very first encounter with Jesus, what would you take away in remembrance? If you or I were to meet that same stranger on the street and their first encounter of Jesus was through us, what would we offer in remembrance?

In these final moments of fellowship with his disciples, Jesus chose to put aside his fears, to take the form of a servant. Surprising to the disciples, but certainly not new for Jesus. Jesus has always sought out the least of us, people on the

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margins: those disabled, diseased, and demonized—befriending them, breaking bread with them, restoring them to wholeness.

When we find ourselves surrounded by Pharisees and false prophets, by people puffed up in their pursuit of power, Jesus brings an alternative reality: identifying with the lowest of us, carrying out acts of servitude, demonstrating the healing power of love.

Friends, Jesus is making his way to the cross. As we move through these next three holy days, let us be present with our Lord in suffering. Let us embody the example of our Savior, who washes us clean and asks us to do the same for one another—the Jesus ever focused on sacrificial, serving, surrendering love.