

Christian Remembrance
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As we approach the celebration of Easter it is good to reflect on the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection in our lives. We know that around 2000 year ago a man named Jesus, who was called the Christ, was crucified, buried, and was said to have risen from the dead three days later. Historically, this is a fact. The question for us is, how does this fact relate to our lives almost 2000 years later?

For many Easter is a celebration of a distant historical event somewhat dislocated from our everyday life. In modern Christianity Easter is often reduced to a mere intellectual recollection of the past events in the history of salvation. Many modern Christians may even ask why they should celebrate Easter when they could easily read about it or remember it on any day. Yet, traditionally there has always been a specific Sunday set aside by the Church each year to celebrate Christ's Resurrection. Indeed, the early Church went to great lengths to establish a fixed dating system for this "feast of feasts," and the central event of all human history.

One key to understanding why Christians would celebrate any feast day of the Church is the concept of "remembrance." There are different types of memory. Most of us are familiar with intellectual memory where with our mind we simply recall the facts of some event. In the ancient Christian tradition, however, there has always been a stronger understanding of "remembrance."

At the last supper, Christ "took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them (His disciples), saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19). If we understand Jesus to be saying that when we enact the Lord's supper that we simply recall the historical significance of Jesus and all of His teachings we actually miss the point of what Christ is saying. This is primarily because the full meaning of Christ's words is easily lost in translation.

The word Christ uses in the Greek for "remembrance" is *anamnesis*. Anamnesis is properly translated from Greek into English as "remembrance." However, it is a "remembrance" that has a deeper meaning beyond simply recalling a past event. Anamnesis means not only historical remembrance but also re-living the events being remembered. Anamnesis implies direct participation in the original event that is being "remembered," what could be called a "making present" of past realities.

Another example can provide additional clarity: when the Good Thief from his cross asked Christ to "remember me in your Kingdom," was he asking Jesus to simply think "yes, I sure do remember that thief who confessed me when I was suffering on the cross?" Or, was the thief asking that he be "made present" with Christ in the Kingdom? Undoubtedly, the thief desired to be saved and not merely to be thought of fondly by Jesus.

If we have this traditional understanding of "remembrance" the great event of Easter takes on a more profound character. In the light of anamnesis, Easter is not simply recalling the historical

events of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Rather, Easter becomes a celebration, a re-living of Christ's victory, a re-living that we participate in.

This type of participatory remembrance brings great joy. If there is anything that should characterize Christians, it is joy. Joy because we partake in a victory that has been won and can to some level be experienced in this transitory life. "Through death *Christ* destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and released those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15). This happened 2000 years ago but it should continue to be relived in the life of every Christian. How else would the Apostle Paul proclaim: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:54-55). The Apostle Paul is not simply recalling that the battle has been won; he has experienced the reality of being delivered from death on a personal level. He has partaken in the death and resurrection of Christ personally (Romans 6:5-6).

Likewise for us the celebration of Holy Week and Easter can be a revisiting and a reliving of every moment in the Christian life where we have experienced the death of the "old man" and the resurrection unto the "new man" fashioned after the image of Christ Himself.

May God bless us as we celebrate Holy Week and Easter this year to experience the true victory that was won in Christ Jesus our Lord, not merely in historical reflection but rather in the depths of our transformed hearts, so that we can proclaim with great joy with the choir of the hosts of heaven: Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!