

DO THIS IN MEMORY OF THE KING...

Jesus' command at the Last Supper is actually two-fold, though usually we only focus on one part. We (as Catholics especially) hear the words "Do this" as a command to celebrate the Eucharist. But Jesus also asked that it be done "in memory of me." In other words, our eucharistic action should never be separated from the act of remembering. And I want to add—the act of conscious, deliberate remembering.

Human beings are richly blessed by the gift of memory. Every Passover, Jews remember the "mighty hand and outstretched arm" with which the LORD liberated His people from the slavery of Egypt. Conversely, every Rosh Hashanah they remember their individual and collective sins in a period of repentance that culminates with Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Every Holy Week Christians remember "the great events that led to our salvation," and we re-enact the awesome time from Holy Thursday's Last Supper to the Easter morning Resurrection.

We remember loved ones who have died, insisting that therefore they are not "dead" to us (and our Memorial Mass annually celebrates this state of faith/hope/love). Our prayer is that God will also remember them, and they will therefore be alive to Him ("Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom..."). Jesus assures us of this in His reply to the Sadducees' test-case about the woman who married the 7 brothers.

We are shaped by our memories (2/3 of which are unconscious, and most of which are about times when we loved or did not love, or else were loved or were not loved). They make us, in large part, who and what we are.

We are like God: we can remember. We can in fact choose to remember. But we are not God—too much of the time we cannot choose to forget. The prophet Jeremiah assures us (chapter 31) that God's new covenant is one in which He will choose to "remember our sins no more." And when God forgets, things cease to exist. If only we could forget in the same way! We strive to forgive, and often we can succeed in the emotional detachment that forgiveness can produce. But so much of the time we cannot cut out the event from our heart—we cannot forget (even if we repress). Memory, the rich blessing, can also be a burden and curse.

How much violence and hatred in our world could be eliminated by the simple act of exercising "negative memory," erasing our minds like camera's memory card, deleting the offending file from the hard-drive of our hearts? We try, but there always seems to be a "back-up" file that we never get to, individually, & corporately as nations or religions...

If Christ will be our King, let's make room in our hearts by clearing away what needs to be dropped. Let's ask Him to make us a little more God-like, by forgetting.