

“The Re-membering”

- How is your memory these days? :)
 - I laugh because I feel like my memory has aged a lot faster than the rest of me recently
 - Over the last three months or so, since our COVID restrictions have been mostly lifted
 - I find myself in this conversation many times about many different things
 - “I just can’t remember how it was before,” I say to myself, or to the people I am talking with
 - Whether it is here at church discussing Holy Week liturgies from 2019
 - Or whether it is with my wife as we try and remember how we handled having a sick kid before we all went home based and things got weird
 - Or at the Diocese gathering with other clergy for the annual Chrism mass
 - Moving forward, even as the pandemic continues, is a challenging thing for everyone.
 - I have also learned that I am not alone in this phenomenon
 - In fact, I recently happened across an article from [BBC.com](https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20201113-covid-19-affecting-memory) that argued the experiences of the last couple of years,
 - Especially the locked down and the limited social interactions that were required of us,
 - Has indeed affected our memories.¹
 - It extends way past our abilities to remember how we did things before, and even starts affecting the automatic things we do out of habit
 - Maybe you have left your car keys in the freezer
 - Or arrived at the store to forget what you needed to buy
 - I carried the case of my sun glasses with me recently, without remembering to put the actual sunglasses in it beforehand
 - And this affect has only stronger impacts on those who were already struggling with memory-eroding diseases

¹ <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20201113-covid-19-affecting-memory>

- Isolation is fertile ground for anxiety and depression, which also affect our memories
- But a surprising find in this little article is that that human beings' memories can be improved when we go to different geographical locations
 - In the finding of our way back home, we activate our hippocampus and enhance all of our memory storage and retrieval
 - Travel is good for you!
- All of the things we lost for a while, and are now only getting back, cautiously hoping it stays like this
- We are remembering them again
- So I think of our purpose in gathering this morning, our reminder of God's decisive act so many years ago
 - Our retelling and remembering the good news story... the best news story²
 - And why we do it every year... over and over again...
 - It is to help us remember.
 - In fact, we do this every Sunday during the Eucharist
 - We have a part known as the 'anamnesis' ³
 - It is literally translated, not amnesia, or not forgetting...
 - Or remembering, when we retell the story of how Jesus instituted the sacrament of bread and the wine
 - And told the disciples to gather together, and when they eat and drink, to remember him.
 - And so it is with Easter. We celebrate Easter to become us again.
 - Re-member, to member again, or to reassemble our members into our whole being...
 - To be Re-membered.
- If you have been reading along, or worshipping along with us, the time after the crucifixion and before Easter morning was not an easy one
 - Jesus had been arrested, accused of sedition, found innocent by Pilate
 - Then mob justice was done, and a guilty murderer was released while Jesus was taken away to be crucified.
 - The mob in any century is not a rational or reliable way of dispensing justice

² PulpitFiction podcast, Easter Year C, retrieved 4-13-22, <https://www.pulpitfiction.com/notes/easterc>

³ Marion J. Hatchett, *Commentary on the American Prayer Book*, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1980) 351

- It was an evil way of getting things done then, and still is in the year 2022
- The disciples all watched helplessly as a politically sanctioned lynching took place
- Peter denies Jesus not once but three times, forgetting everything he had been taught, had seen, and even who he really was
- And after that terrible Good Friday, as we discussed two days ago, the body was removed and buried in a borrowed tomb
- Which was quite the exception to the rule, as most people who were crucified were denied any form of burial
- The nasty and torturous truth of the cross is that it often resulted in there not being a body left to bury
 - One of the more painful realities of this form of execution and deterrent
- The gospels are all very quiet about what happened during this period of time between Friday and Sunday
- As Kay mentioned last night, all four gospels record the women disciples beginning to prepare for the washing of the body
- And that since the next day was the Sabbath, they all rested and waited for Sunday
- Can you imagine that Sabbath day? The day in between.
 - Holy Saturday, while the tomb was still closed.
 - Since it was the sabbath, they could not do any work, so they had to just sit and wait before even washing and anointing the body of Jesus
 - But I see in my mind's eye a group of people, not limited to just the twelve mind you,
 - A whole group of men and women now trying to remember who they were before all of this transpired
 - Who they were before, because they are now going to have to go back to it.
 - I can see Peter, James and John trying to remember what it was like to be fishermen before... and what it will be like to go back to it.
 - Because as it turned out, despite their belief and faith, until that Sunday morning, it seemed to have all been lost
 - I see them in the brain fog that day in between...
 - Maybe isolated, certainly depressed, and no longer remembering who they were before or while Jesus was alive
 - Maybe they were staring out across the sea of Galilee trying to remember what it was like when he walked on water
 - Want it was like when he calmed the storm that time

- And remembering eating bread and drinking wine with him
- So much had been lost.
- When the next day came following the restful and terrible Sabbath, the women went to the tomb, led by Mary Magdalene
 - They find the empty tomb.
 - They were the first to witness and believe in this miracle, this resurrection, the first apostles
 - Jesus appears at the tomb in both Matthew and John's gospel
 - And in our Gospel of John this morning she mistakes him for the gardener
 - In the gospels of Mark and Luke, they talk about one or two men clothed in dazzling white and telling them he is not here.
 - And it is in Luke's gospel that the angel says: "Remember what he told you"
 - And soon after, Luke records, "And they remembered."
 - They were RE-membered.
 - They were restored to themselves, and more importantly, renewed in God's calling and purpose for them
 - The women at the tomb became the first witnesses to God's new, re-membering of not only Christ, but of all of us, and all of the world.
 - The resurrection was a pivotal moment because it was not only a concrete historical event in a time and a place many years ago
 - Easter is now. Easter is always⁴.
 - Because Easter is what God is still doing.
 - God was and is re-membering us and the whole of creation
 - Re-assembling and recreating all, making a new way when there was no way
- I think about Jesus in that tomb... those hours after his burial and before the resurrection came
 - Jesus going from "truly dead", scattered, de-membered in a way, to truly alive again
 - Jesus slowly waking up, remembering what had happened, re-membering who he was
 - We have no idea what that was like: Barbara Brown-Taylor observes that the events in that tomb remain between God and Jesus⁵
 - But we see the product, the outcome

⁴ Bp. Chilton, Easter Message 2022, <https://youtu.be/OH5gA7XliEo>

⁵ Barbara Brown Taylor, *Escape from the Tomb*, <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=640>

- Jesus was stitched back together physically, mentally, and spiritually again, God re-membered him
- God was continuing creation, the first six days God created the world, rested on the sabbath, and now picked up where God left off
- This is the new day 8 of that week that began in Genesis 1
- Recreating and restoring everything
- This is why Easter is not just historical- this is why it connects to you and me today
- Alleluia, God is still re-membering, re-stitching us back together
- It was Fernando Sabino, Brazilian author, who wrote,
 - “In the end, everything will be [all right]. If it is not [all right], it’s not the end.”⁶
- God is still doing this. God has not forgotten us.
- Thanks to the resurrection, we are no longer isolated from God and each other
- Thanks to the resurrection, we are no longer trapped by tombs of sin and death
- Thanks to the resurrection, there is always another chapter, always more hope
- And God is always ready to roll back a stone and help us escape the prisons of our own making.
- God cannot wait to re-member you, and remind you of who you really are created to be
- And in who’s image you are created

⁶ Translation of Fernando Sabino, *No fim dá certo: Se não deu, é porque não chegou ao fim* (São Paulo: Record, 1998), quoted by Richard Rohr, <https://email.cac.org/t/ViewEmail/d/9F4E017AD452B2D32540EF23F30FEDED/94559016179953939780B6D0B3F3FC10?alternativeLink=False>, retrieved online 4/17/2022.

- My friends, today is the best news day ever made!
 - The Good news in Christ is that no matter what tomb you currently find yourself in
 - No matter how many pieces your heart has been shattered into
 - No matter how bad, how dark, or how sinful your world is
 - God has not forgotten you, and God has not given up on you.
 - God is in the business of reminding, and re-membering
 - God is waiting take you by the hand and raise you to that new you, the true you, the one only your creator can know so well
 - God is making a new thing. A new way. Opening up dead ends and rolling back stones.
 - God is re-membering us.
 - God help us to never forget.
 - Alleluia, Christ is Risen.
 - The Lord is Risen indeed.

Amen.