

Chaplain's Assembly – Father Philip Murphy SSC
20th November 2014
“The Eucharist”

Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

A narrated version of this talk as a PowerPoint presentation can be found here:
http://youtu.be/j39p8F_3kfs

You should all be aware by now that the Eucharist is celebrated in our Chapel every Tuesday and Thursday at 1.00pm, lunchtime. But what is the Eucharist? What is this service which is celebrated Sunday by Sunday and day by day in Churches all around the world?

Well, it is one of the seven Sacraments of the Church. So far I have spoken about Baptism, Confirmation, the Anointing of the Sick and Reconciliation. As a Sacrament, the Eucharist is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. It is something we can see which gives us God's grace which we cannot see. The outward sign of the sacrament is bread and wine, which is taken and blessed and the words of Jesus at his Last Supper are repeated. The words where he said to his Apostles, “This is my body” and “This is my blood”. “Eat” and “Drink” in remembrance of me. The inward and spiritual grace is the gift of Jesus Christ himself in the Eucharist.

So it is a holy meal in which we “Remember”. But it isn't like looking at a photo of a holiday we may have taken last summer and thinking nice things about it. “Remembering” in the Eucharist is a completely different thing. It is about making the past present today.

To explain that, I want to look at three words to begin with. First of all the word “member.” The word member can mean a body part, such as an arm or a leg. It can mean an individual of a group, such as we are each a member of the community of St Paul's College. The word also means a part of a whole. One piece of a much larger piece.

And then we have the word “dismember.” We may read in the newspapers of an awful crime where a body has been dismembered, where parts have been cut off. The word dismember can mean to break up, tear apart. And the opposite of dismember is: to “remember.” On one level it can mean to think of again, but another meaning, and this is the meaning in the Eucharist, it is to “Put back together”. So in the Eucharist we put back together, we RE- MEMBER Christ. We are not thinking nice thoughts of the past, but we are making Jesus Christ present today, with us, in the Eucharist.

In the Bible the original word which is used for Remembrance is a Greek word: “Anamnesis.” It means much, much more than simply thinking about something. It means to make present the past today. It means to put something back together and make it present for us now. So Jesus in the Gospels asks his disciples to celebrate the Eucharist “In Anamnesis of me”. To make him present here and now.

A little while ago at a Monday Assembly Mr. Yuen told us about the value of time, time which is so quickly eaten up and which is so important in this earthly life. But in the Eucharist there is no time. Time does not exist. Jesus, on the cross two thousand years ago, is present for us here and now. Jesus, risen from the dead two thousand years ago, is present for us here and now. When we celebrate the Eucharist we re-member Christ. Those events (which some think of as just history) become real for us here and now.

Disney's *Ratatouille* may not be the first film many people think of when they think of the Eucharist. In the film a rat dreams of becoming a great chef. One evening when a food critic, who is the evil person in the film, comes to the restaurant, the rat cooks him *Ratatouille*. It is a dish which would normally be seen as traditional peasant food that would not be served in such a fine restaurant. The restaurant could be in danger of losing its star rating. However, as he eats the food, the past is made real for the critic and he enters into the remembrance of his mother and the food she had made for him as a child.

In the film, and in the Eucharist, remembrance (anamnesis) tears down the barriers of past and present and we enter into the kingdom of God as the acts of Jesus and his sacrifice are made real for us at the altar.

Don't forget that it was this celebration with the bread and wine which Jesus instructed his disciples to 'do' in remembrance of him. He could have told them to get together and have meetings or sports events or discussion groups, but he didn't. He told them to do "THIS" in remembrance of him.