

The Eucharist as a Memorial Meal: An Advent Reflection – December 12, 2019

James J. Bacik

I. Background

A. Scripture

1. The Jewish community remembers the Exodus by a Passover Meal.
“When you come to the land that the Lord will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this observance. And when your children ask you, “What do you mean by this observance?” you shall say, “It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, for he passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, when he struck down the Egyptians but spared our houses.” (Exodus 12:25-27)
2. The earliest reference to the Eucharistic meal is in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 written in the middle 50s. Paul is handing on a tradition he received.
“For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”
3. The only reference in the Gospels to the memorial command of Jesus is Luke 22:14-20.
“When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.” After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”

B. Liturgical Texts

1. Eucharistic Prayer IV.
“Therefore, O Lord, as we now celebrate the memorial of our redemption, we remember Christ’s Death, and his descent to the realm of the dead, we proclaim his Resurrection and his Ascension to your right hand, and as we await his coming in glory, we offer you his Body and Blood, the sacrifice acceptable to you which brings salvation to the whole world.”
2. Three Memorial Acclamations:
We proclaim your Death, O Lord,
And profess your Resurrection
Until you come again.

When we eat this bread and drink this Cup,
We proclaim your Death, O Lord,
Until you come again.

Save us, Savior of the world,
For by your cross and Resurrection
You have set us free.

C. Vatican II.

1. The document on the Liturgy has many ways of describing the Eucharist including memorial. At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the ages until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved Spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us. (47)
2. We are still in process of implementing this decree on the liturgy.

D. Catechisms

1. Catechism of the Catholic Church
“The command of Jesus to repeat his actions and words “until he comes” does not only ask us to remember Jesus and what he did. It is directed at the liturgical celebration, by the apostles and their successors, of the *memorial* of Christ, of his life, of his death, of his Resurrection, and of his intercession in the presence of the Father.” (n1341)
2. United States Catholic Catechism for Adults
“This Eucharistic sacrifice is the memorial of Christ’s redeeming death. The term *memorial* in this context is not simply a remembrance of past events; it is a making present in a sacramental manner the sacrifice of the Cross of Christ and his victory. “When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the memorial of her Lord’s death and resurrection, this central event of salvation becomes really present and the work of our redemption is carried out” (EE, no.11). The Eucharistic sacrifice is offered to adore and thank God, to pray for all our needs, and to gain pardon for our sins.” (p.221)

II. Remembering Jesus at Mass

A. The Suffering Servant

1. Jesus “went about doing good work and healing all who were in the grip of the devil, and God was with him.” (Acts 10:38)
2. In his inaugural sermon in the synagogue of Nazareth Jesus identified himself with the mission of the Suffering Servant in IS 61:1-2.

“The spirit of the Lord is upon me;
Therefore he has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor,
To proclaim liberty to captives,
Recovery of sight to the blind
And release to prisoners,
To announce a year of favor from the Lord.”

Rolling up the scroll he gave it back to the assistant and sat down. All in the synagogue had their eyes fixed on him. Then he began by saying to them, “Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing. (Luke 4: 18-21)

3. At the last supper, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. (John 13:1-17)
- B. He was rejected by family and friends
1. His fellow inhabitants of Nazareth dismissed him as being too ordinary. “Is this not the carpenter? (Mark 6:3)
 2. In Luke’s Gospel the people of Nazareth wanted to kill Jesus when he pointed out that God blessed Gentiles. “At these words, they got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff.” (Luke 4:29)
 3. In Mark’s Gospel his mother and brothers after he chose the Twelve “came to take charge of him, saying “He is out of his mind.” (Mark 3:21)
 4. At the arrest of Jesus Matthew (26:56) and Mark (14:50) both repeat that all the disciples “forsook him and fled.”
- C. We remember why Jesus was rejected and executed by religious and political leaders:
1. In John’s Gospel the raising of Lazarus to life, the chief priest and Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin “From that day onward there was a plan afoot to kill him (John 11:43-54) and Jesus could no longer move “freely in Jewish circles.” (54) The leaders feared the immense popularity of Jesus, which could cause the Romans “to sweep away our sanctuary and our nation. (11:48)
 2. In Mark (11:18-19) and Luke (19:47-48) it is the Cleansing of the Temple that incurs the wrath of the chief priests and the scribes who “sought a way to destroy him” because according to Mark “the multitude was astonished at his teaching.” (18) They feared that Jesus would supplant their authority.
 3. In John’s Gospel Pilate condemned Jesus to execution because he feared he would be denounced to the Emperor for not punishing a so-called king, a potential rival (John 19:12).
- D. We remember Jesus was a community builder forming an inclusive community
1. He included Galilean women, for example, Mary of Magdala, in his ministry, and relied on their financial support. (Luke 8:1-5)
 2. He returned the lepers, banished to the margins, to the community life by curing them and having them get the approval from the priests. (Luke 17:11-19)

3. He engaged the Samaritan woman at the well in an outreach to the Samaritans. (John 4:1-42)
 4. He cured the daughter of the Canaanite woman. (Matthew 15: 21-28)
 5. He chose the Twelve to represent the 12 Tribes of Israel. (Matthew 10:1-4)
- E. He taught and practiced forgiveness
1. He forgave the women taken in adultery. (John 8:1-11)
 2. He told the Prodigal Son parable. (Luke 15:11-32)
 3. He forgave his executioners, probably the leaders, found only in Luke 23:34.
 4. He forgave the repentant thief. (Luke 23:39-43)
- F. He went to his death freely as a consequence of fidelity to his mission
1. In John's Gospel (10:18) Jesus says, referring to his own life, "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord."
 2. On the cross Jesus says "Father into your hands I commend my Spirit." (Luke 23:46)
- G. God raised Jesus to Life
1. Empty tomb stories – Peter and Beloved Disciple run to the tomb and find it empty and the Beloved Disciple believes.
 2. Resurrection appearances: For example, Doubting Thomas. (John 20:24-29)
- H. The Ascension Glorification and Return of Christ (Parousia)
1. During his public ministry Jesus spoke of the end times. In Mark's Gospel (13:30-32) Jesus says: "This generation will not pass away until all these things take place" and adds "As to the exact day or hour, no one knows it, neither the angels in heaven nor even the Son, but only the Father."
 2. The early disciples presumed Jesus would return soon. In the earliest NT writing 1 Thessalonians (4:16-17) we read "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever."
 3. In the Acts of the Apostles (1:1-11) Jesus appeared to the apostles during a 40 day period after his death; he tells them not to leave Jerusalem where they will be "baptized with the Holy Spirit" and be witnesses to the ends of the earth; then "he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight;" then an angel tells them Jesus "will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."
 4. The Nicene Creed from the 4th century. "He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

III. Celebrating the "dangerous memory of Jesus" Johann Baptist Metz (1928-Dec. 2, 2019) *Faith in History and Society*

- A. Background
 - 1. Metz was a student and critic of Karl Rahner.
 - 2. He developed a “political theology.”
- B. Memory
 - 1. Memory is an important theme in the history of Western thought from Plato, who thought learning is remembering what the soul knew in a previous life, to Christian notions of memory not as a mere recollection of past events but “representing” God’s saving works in history, making them present for our reflection and as a basis for action today.
 - 2. Memory is “the fundamental form of expression of Christian faith,” especially the exercise of freedom.
 - 3. It is also especially important to remember the actual specific suffering of oppressed people which moves us to liberate and empower those suffering injustice today.
- C. The Church
 - 1. Has the responsibility to keep alive the dangerous memory of Jesus which challenges unjust systems and awakens the consciousness of ordinary Christians today.
 - 2. The Church keeps alive the “eschatological memory” of the promise of the final victory of good over evil without claiming to know specifically what concrete societal form genuine liberation takes.
 - 3. Liturgy is one way the Church carries out its mission.



Fr. Bacik’s 2020 Lecture Schedule:

- Thursday, March 12, 2020
The Samaritan Woman at Jacob’s Well: An Inspiration for our Spiritual Life
- Thursday, April 2, 2020 • *Topic to be determined*
- Thursday, May 21, 2020 • *Annual Karl Rahner Lecture*
- Thursday, June 18, 2020 • *Topic to be determined*
- Thursday, July 23, 2020 • *Political topic*
- Thursday, August 13, 2020 • *Political topic*
- Thursday, September 10, 2020 • *Political topic*
- Thursday, October 15, 2020 • *Political topic*
- Thursday, November 19, 2020 • *Topic to be determined*
- Thursday, December 17, 2020 • *Advent Reflection*

Cost: \$10 preregistered; \$15 at the door. To reserve tickets call 419-824-3515 or email franciscanvillage@sistersosf.org.

Tickets may be purchased in advance at www.sylvaniafranciscanvillage.org.

For more information contact: Amy Campbell at 419-824-3515 or acampbell@sistersosf.org.