

Memory: Remembering our deceased Relatives.

Memory is a very precious gift. It connects us with people and events which are no longer with us. When someone we love dies we feel a desperate need to connect our lives with that of the deceased person. Here is where memory comes to our aid. As soon as our loved one dies memory begins to work overtime. But of course as soon as the loved one dies a cloud of grief descends on us also. Grief is not a bad thing. In fact it is a good and necessary thing. Nevertheless it can be very painful especially when the loss is great. So we may be tempted to suppress it. However memory makes this almost impossible. It continually confronts us with our loss. It insists on stirring things up. So we may be tempted to suppress our memory of the deceased.

But to forget a loved one is to do him or her a great injustice. We all long to be remembered. To be forgotten is to be treated as if we never existed. What people fear most is not so much death, as being forgotten. Many people who have gone before us took this "Remembering" very seriously. They sat down every November, and wrote out one by one the names of those who had died in their family, and neighbourhood. In other words they made their memory come alive. This exercise became their prayer, for they knew that remembering was a personal responsibility. Some people still do this, but we

sometimes forget. It is not just a very beautiful tradition, but it is a humble expression of our faith. When we fail to remember we become less a family, and we lose something of our closeness as children of God.

Jesus also wanted to be remembered. In his love for us he left us a special way of remembering him. He left us the Eucharist. "Do this", he said, "in memory of me". The wonderful thing is that when we remember him in this way he actually becomes present to us. Not physically present, but never the less really present. And through the Eucharist, a spiritual bond is forged between us, with the result that we are able to enter into a deeper intimacy with him, than if he were physically present. In the Eucharist also we remember our deceased relatives and friends. We join their intentions, and ours with Jesus who brings them back to our Father who never forgets.

If we have loved somebody we want them to be with the Father in heaven. We want them to be in the company of Jesus as he pleads for them before our father in heaven. In other words our memory and Jesus's memory are at one. Memory fills our life with the presence of the departed loved ones, and memory fills the life of Jesus who has died for us. In fact memory can bring us closer than physical presence. Absence can help us see each other in a new and better light. In memory we are in touch with one another's spirits. When we remember with love we evoke

each other's spirits, and are thus able to enter into greater intimacy.

When we finally accept that our loved one is gone , we are able to express gratitude to God for their presence with us over so many years. This helps us to let go of such negative feelings as anger and guilt. In their place comes a flood of fond memories to cherish. Memories are like good wine they improve with time.

One of the ways of repaying the debt we own the deceased is not to forget. And by remembering them we continue to reap a harvest from what they have sowed while still with us. Yet we must not cling to the deceased . We must let them go to be with God, where we hope one day to join them.

We pray therefore for all our deceased relatives and friends, especially those who have died in the last year. We pray also for you, their relatives and friends that God may console you at this time, and that he may bring them to heaven where they can remember us in the presence of the one wh loves. us. Eternal rest grant to them