

Explanation of the Different Parts of the Mass

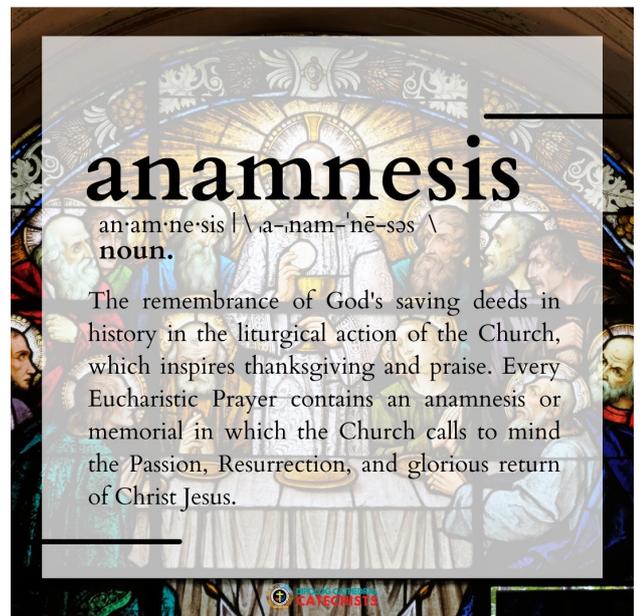
The Memorial

The memorial is a part of the Eucharistic Prayer, pronounced shortly after the words of consecration: “Father, calling to mind the death your Son endured for our salvation, his glorious resurrection and ascension into heaven...” (Eucharistic Prayer III).

The Greek word, *anamnesis*, means “memory”. On a daily basis, Christians of both the Eastern and Western Rites obey that final commandment Christ left us: “Do this in memory of me.” This is what He clearly expressed in the Last Supper, “the night before He

died” (Eucharistic Prayer I), “the night He was betrayed” (Eucharistic Prayer III). We can still fulfill this mandate, in every time and place, precisely because Christ’s priesthood is eternal and heavenly (cf. Heb. 4:14; 18:1).

“Memory” is the word that truly links the Eucharist and the Jewish Passover, which also was a “memorial” (cf. Ex. 12:14). It is of such great importance that Saint Paul, in his description of the institution of the Eucharist, mentions Jesus’ commandment twice. Moreover, he specifies the content of this





memorial of Jesus that is to be made, saying: “Every time you eat this bread and drink of this cup, you announce the death of the Lord” (1 Cor. 11:26). The content of the memorial is Christ’s death.

The memorial of the Eucharist is not simply a memory of something that happened in the past, of an event that has already occurred centuries ago. Rather, it is a “re-presentation” (in the most literal sense of the term), that is, it involves making present here and now, in a sacramental and real form, the same mystery that is celebrated: the Lord’s Paschal Mystery: His death and resurrection.

We can ask ourselves: Is this really possible? Theologian J.A. Sayés explains it in the following manner: “Christ’s sacrifice takes place within the heavenly sanctuary. The moment of its consummation is prolonged, because all in the heavenly realm participates in an eternal nature... (This means to say that Christ’s Paschal Mystery, through His Resurrection, takes on an eternal nature – an “eternal now”). If Christ’s sacrifice is eternal in heaven, then it can become present among us if this same victim and this same priestly action become present in the Eucharist. In fact, the priest’s action is not something sepa-

rate; it is a participation in the eternal priestly action of Christ in heaven. Nothing is repeated or multiplied; it is simply a matter of a re-occurring participation, through the sacrament, in the one and only sacrifice of Christ on the Cross which has an eternal and lasting character in heaven. It is not Christ's sacrifice that is repeated; rather, what is repeated are our many acts of participation in that sacrifice" (translated from the Spanish edition of: Sayés, *The Eucharistic Mystery*. pg. 321-323).

Thus, the Eucharist is always in the Church acting as a living heart that pumps the life-giving graces of the blood of Christ, the Eternal Priest, throughout the entire Mystical Body. "As often as the sacrifice of the cross by which Christ our Pasch is sacrificed is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried out" (LG 3).

In theological terms, the memorial consists in making present the memorial of Jesus to the Father; "remembering" together with the Father all that Jesus has done out of love for us, and for Him, in forgiving us and rescuing us. In the Old Testament, in the moments of intense trials we hear the exclamation the people make to God: "Remember Abraham, our father; remember Isaac and Jacob." Now, as we are the People of the New Covenant, we can lift our voices to God in a cry infinitely more powerful: "Remember Christ, Your Son, and His Sacrifice!" All of the Eucharistic Prayers present us with examples of this. They tell of the wonders of God and all that

His Son has done for us: “He was conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit... a man like us in all things but sin... he gave himself up to death... he sent the Holy Spirit from you, Father... When the time came for him to be glorified by you, his heavenly Father, he showed the depth of his love” (Eucharistic Prayer IV).

The Church “makes memory” (anamnesis) of these works, and through the liturgical action of Christ the Priest, she makes them present and active with a saving power in our very midst.

Thus, every person can have a personal encounter with the saving work that Christ has carried out. Christ offers Himself personally to him. Each one of us should learn to receive and live this mystery that forms a part of our own life, allowing ourselves to be saved by Christ, accepting the communion with Him that He offers us. Every person should pronounce his/her “yes” to the love of God in each of his personal encounters with Him in the Eucharist.