



Remembering the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
of the  
Death of our Founder, Fr. Francis Jordan

## A Powerful Word: “REMEMBER”

Whenever we use the word – “remember” – we tend to imagine ourselves going back in time, reliving a past event or recalling a relationship with someone who is no longer with us. We think of it as “taking the present back into the past.” But the true root of the word – which goes all the way back to our Judeo-Christian beginnings – means something very different. It means “bringing the past into the present.” It means bringing someone who was once a “member” of our family or community into the present. It literally means “re-membering” them, “making them a member again” – here and now, alive and present.

The people of the Old Testament did not have a strong belief in an afterlife. Their concept of “Sheol” was not like heaven or hell in the way we mean them. It was merely a “place of the dead.” There was, at that time, no strong understanding of or belief in immortality. The only way to be truly immortal was to be “re-membered” by people. As long as people recall your life and tell your story, they “re-member” you in the present, and you live on.

Today, when the Jewish people come together each year at Passover time and “re-member” the first Passover Meal and the Exodus, they are not simply telling the story or recalling a people who were once freed from slavery in the past. In their understanding of “remembering,” they are bringing those people from the past and that event from the past into the present, here and now, and ALL are saved from slavery in this event. This is why the biblical story reads as though thousands of people are present at that first Exodus – they are trying to portray the idea that ALL the people of Israel are being saved in this event – those from the past, the present, and yet to come.

This understanding of the word “re-member” gives us a new and greater insight into the Last Supper, when Jesus and his disciples celebrated that ancient Seder ritual. But this time, Jesus gives his disciples a new meaning to the meal. When he took the Bread and the Cup and shared them with the disciples, he said: “From now on, whenever you do this, re-member ME.” Each time we come together to celebrate the Eucharist, we aren’t simply recalling stories about Jesus. We are truly “re-membering” him, making him a member of our family here and now, and he is alive and present to us once again.

Throughout the year, we Salvatorians will take the time to share our “Passion for Remembering.” But if we do so in the true understanding of that ancient word, we won’t simply be recalling stories about the events and people from our past. We’ll be bringing them here to us in the present, “re-membering” them once again, and making them come alive to us here and now.

Many of our words from long ago lose their original meaning and “something gets lost in the translation.” Fortunately for us, the ancient meaning in the word “re-member” is still there in English. We simply need to mean it fully when we use that word.

Submitted by: Father Michael Hoffman, SDS, January 2018