

CONGRESS STATEMENT

Anamnesis: Remembering in Action, Place and Time

Preamble

Congress venues are sometimes decided on pragmatic grounds. However, for our next congress there are serendipitous connections to be made between place and theme. In 2019, our congress will focus around 'remembering', and the inaugural act of worship will take place in a building which stands as testimony to the complexity of the theme: Durham Cathedral.

According to legend, the monks who had travelled some distance in search of a permanent resting place for Cuthbert of Lindisfarne were led to the site where Durham Cathedral now stands. The place of this encounter was where they were to build a church to house the body of their bishop. The cult of St Cuthbert developed, and pilgrims flocked to his shrine. The Norman church begun in the late eleventh century would house a richly decorated shrine. It was believed that the saint's body remained intact.

In the Galilee Chapel at the west end of the building there is another significant place of memory: the tomb of the historian Bede, a monk of Jarrow in the seventh century, sometimes called the Father of English History. Between these sites of sanctity and scholarship, the building preserves a great deal more evidence of remembering. A fairly recent one deserves mention, the Transfiguration window, dedicated in 2010 in honour of Michael Ramsey, Bishop of Durham and Archbishop of Canterbury. Its subject matter is glory and resurrection, yet the coincidence of the Feast of the Transfiguration with the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki lies in its hinterland... Remembering is ambiguous and paradoxical.

There is an intrinsic relationship between the liturgical celebrations of Christians, actions of remembering, and the times and places where these things happen. When Christians gather for worship, they do that in the name of the triune God, who left traces of presence and proximity in the history of humankind, most specifically through the Christ event and the paschal mystery. Saying thanks for these multiple saving initiatives, primarily by remembering them, is essential for any liturgical act, whether it does that implicitly, straightforwardly, subtly, or manifestly. Moreover, the locations where liturgical events take place very often acquire meanings which go far beyond the ordinary.

Upon closer inspection, however, there are striking features regarding the human faculty of memory and the role it plays in Christian liturgies. To remember is typical of human beings in general – we might say that it is part of being human. It is moreover of particular importance in the register of the Christian religion, in which the relations between the universal and the particular levels are not so clear. Memories touch on matters of life and death. They are intriguingly connected with what it means to be fully human and to be fully Christian. The construction of one's individual identity as well as collective identities are largely dependent on the memories held by the individual or by the particular communities, and on the ways in which these memories are cherished and suppressed. It comes as no surprise, then, that Christians have always attached particular weight to the

commemoration of the dead and the communion of saints both in their liturgical services and in their theological and spiritual self-understanding.

At the same time, to remember, to recollect and to commemorate can never be equal to knowing everything that happened in the past, let alone to knowing it with exactitude. Even if such complete knowledge were possible, it seems neither necessary nor desirable, for remembering itself is subject to time and, therefore, always in process.

Of necessity, therefore, a certain selectivity governs what it is that one remembers. But making such selections is as risky as it is delicate and difficult. It raises challenging questions about oblivion, guilt, suffering, responsibility, and authority. Who decides to remember what, when, where, and for which purpose? Which motifs, or whose interests, are involved in remembering? The manipulation of memories is a very serious issue, while the healing of hurt memories requires a great deal of patience, courage, and sensitivity.

In sum, there seem to be many pressing reasons, both traditional and more contextual, to investigate again the immensely rich concept and reality of anamnesis, and to explore how remembering is at issue in funerals, in the Eucharist, in daily prayer, in the celebration of the sacraments, in pilgrimages, in devotions, and in many outstanding places where Christians have lived and worshipped.

It is in the light of these observations that we invite all the members of Societas Liturgica and everyone who is interested in participating in our 2019 congress in Durham to submit proposals for individual papers, for workshops, and for poster presentations around the following eight thematic clusters.

[1] Cathedrals – monuments – pilgrimages – places of veneration

Cathedrals and their liturgies speak a language of 'primary theology'. They stand as testimony to traditions received, transmitted and remembered. Human beings of all times and places feel drawn to such places of remembering. Here they can discover stories of holy people and of death defied. In pilgrimages to holy places, in responding to the art and architecture which have developed around these sites, and in witnessing and participating in the rituals performed there, people can experience transformations.

Guiding questions include: How can one explain the special attraction of cathedrals and other similar monuments? How can the cathedral as a living monument of human cultural heritage serve as a place to inspire solidarity and interreligious dialogue? How can liturgical theology find words and concepts that include our need to be remembered by God before we ourselves can do anamnesis? How can the vision of the pilgrimage to mount Zion be integral part of our liturgical studies? How can God's healing action of remembrance be experienced in works of art and architecture that are not only linked to the beauty of artistic activity, but also to the dark sides of human behaviour?

[2] Funerals – remembering and commemorating the dead

Ritual practices surrounding death and the bodies of the dead are distinguishing characteristics of human societies. Places of burial, memorials to the dead, and grave goods provide one set of evidence. Funeral rites, mourning customs, funeral sermons, and the marking of anniversaries provide another. In Western societies, the signs are that the Churches' hold on the important pastoral and liturgical ministry of funerals is rapidly diminishing. We observe the removal of the funeral ceremony

to a secular setting, under the leadership of a civil celebrant, as well as an excessive individualisation and personalisation of burial rites, which have often become very emotional. In African and Asian cultures, and the cultures of native populations in North America, Oceania and elsewhere, the situation may be different from the West. It would be worthwhile to investigate what the similarities and differences are, and to evaluate the role and function of rituals and liturgies associated with death, and their impact on people's lives.

Guiding questions include: Do secular or semi-secular rituals have value as forms of liturgical improvisation? What do they tell us about attitudes to the body? What are the consequences for the proclamation of the hope of the resurrection? How does media profiling of celebrity funerals influence popular practice? What is the status of a place of remembering when ashes have been sprinkled at multiple sites, or kept at home? What can research reveal about the consequences of the ritual denial of death by emphasising thanksgiving and some kind of continuity in absence? How are funerals celebrated and experienced in non-Western cultures? What is the influence of secularization, globalization, individualization and pluralization on liturgies and rituals in Africa, Asia and Oceania?

[3] Remembering and embodiment – personal identity and identity construction – collective and cultural memories

Recent anthropological research finds it necessary to reconsider the relationship between the human body and mind. Human mental activity is now understood as entirely dependent on physical (material) conditions. It is only through our bodies that we can use our brains. Emotions, located in the body, are necessary for any brain activity. Moreover, personal as well as communal identities are embodied realities. The same is true for the human faculty of memory. Memory is an integral part of identity construction, both for individuals and for communities. In addition, memories are constitutive of cultures. Any culture will have to come to terms with wars, natural disasters, terrorist attacks, etc. And the processes through which this happens come, arguably, very close to liturgical events.

Guiding questions include: Which is the role of the physical condition of memory? In which ways is the material linked to the immaterial, and how can liturgy help us better understand that connection? How can this connection between the material and the immaterial be further explored, especially in interdisciplinary studies where liturgy involves the arts, music, literature, architecture, social studies, neurobiology or evolutionary theory? In which ways can the notion of cultural memory be fruitful for understanding liturgies? What does liturgy teach us in terms of our self-understanding as religious believers?

[4] The manipulation of time and memory – remembrance as critique – historical adequacy – political dimensions

For Christians, Sunday is the memorial day of the resurrection. The past, the present as well as the future are equally involved. However, the right balance between the three dimensions of time is not always properly maintained. There is an attitude which attaches a disproportionate weight to the past and holds on to it rigidly (fundamentalism), but history has also known instances where only the present or the future counted. In other words, it seems difficult and complex to determine the right relationship between memory and historical truth, and in particular, to situate the liturgy within this relationship.

Guiding questions include: How can the act of remembering through liturgy be understood or defined in the midst of the three dimensions of time? What is (the value, or the importance) of historical truth? How can the manipulation of memories be prevented, and to what extent is liturgy somehow

able to do that? How can one cope with truth in remembrance when political issues seem difficult to resolve, and when politicians put a veil on the past? Under which conditions is Christian remembering a powerful transforming reality in the world? How can it influence our dealings with the past, the present and the future? How can liturgical commemoration criticize certain developments in culture and society?

[5] *Hurt memories – the healing of memories – rituals and emotions*

Memories of both individual persons and communities can be hurt in many different ways. Not recognizing central experiences which make up a part of one's identity, can in the end become a denial of selfhood. In common ritual acts of remembrance, however, groups and individuals can find a form of healing. It is known that activities such as singing can foster healing and strengthen resilience. They can help overcome anxiety and trauma. They can even bring back memories otherwise lost to dementia.

Guiding questions include: How can places and liturgies of remembrance contribute to the healing of hurt memories? How can liturgical studies learn from neighbouring disciplines such as pastoral psychology, social anthropology and ritual studies? And conversely, how can liturgical scholars contribute to these fields of knowledge? How can places and actions of remembrance help victims who carry wounds inflicted by people in Christian ministry? In which ways can liturgies help perpetrators to repent and to seek forgiveness? How can liturgies of remembrance serve in a 'maieutic' way, i.e. as 'midwives', bringing new forms of healing to birth?

[6] *Prayer texts – archiving – written discourse*

It is thanks to the scholarly expertise in ancient languages, phonology, manuscript conservation and decipherment, inscriptions, and archaeology, which has reconstructed liturgical practice from the written or material deposit, that liturgists are now able to enter into conversation with an increasing range of related disciplines. That development has brought new tools, but it has not diminished the need for continuing engagement with the 'classics' of our liturgical heritage. The results of this engagement are paradoxical. Old certainties about sources and authorship collapse as new evidence comes to light, and well-known evidence undergoes reinterpretation. It seems impossible and even irresponsible not to deal with fundamental questions about archiving, i.e. the systematisation of how we organize our memories through texts and other monuments we receive from bygone generations. Guiding questions include: How does the study of ancient and medieval Christian worship, which is still vigorously and urgently alive, deal with novel developments, urging scholars to reflect increasingly critically on their discipline, in addition to presenting findings with scholarly objectivity? What strategies has it employed in order to discover in the liturgical record the voices of those who have not previously been identified (e.g. lay people and women)? How has it addressed forms of idealism or false certainty in reconstructions of the past? How does it readjust perspectives when claims that have been perpetuated as certainties turn out to be false? Are we at a point where it is possible to survey the fruit of interdisciplinary collaborations with the human, social and natural sciences? How will lost liturgical memory be recovered, and why does this matter? What would be adequate criteria for archiving liturgical sources, and how can we teach the importance and methodology of such archiving to future generations?