

Alzheimer's is a cruel disease because it robs the sufferer of their memory; and memory is vital to us because it tells me who I am.

Without memory I couldn't complete this sentence, remember what I said before it, or link it to what I'm going to say next.

Without memory, I couldn't know who I am from one moment to the next: I would be drifting around, blown this way and that; unable to understand myself or anything about me.

The Church never suffers from Alzheimer's; she always follows Her Lord's command to: 'Do this in memory of me.'

The Church's memory is what we Catholics call Tradition.

Unfortunately, tradition has become a dirty word in the world and, to some extent, in the Church.

Tradition is equated with being stuffy, old-fashioned, out of touch.

Forgetting the past, and letting the Spirit speak to us now became very trendy in the Church from the 1960's: but that's a form of Christian memory loss.

In more recent years, there's been a reaction to that; a kind of romanticism about the 'good old days' in the Church.

But, as Pope Pius XII said as far back as 1947: "Ancient usage must not be esteemed more suitable and proper on the simple ground that it carries the savour and aroma of antiquity."

Pope Pius XII: Mediator Dei; 61

So, for people to want the Church to completely throw out the old to bring in the new is wrong.

Equally, to throw out the new to reinstate the old is wrong too.

Although the Second Vatican Council finished 50 years ago, it was, and is, a defining moment for the Church, which is still being played out in our lives today.

A lot of people think that the sole purpose of the Second Vatican Council was to throw out the old completely.

To begin '*Aggiornamento*:' an Italian word that means, 'Bringing up to date.'

But just as important to the Council was '*Ressourcement*:' a French word, which means, 'A recovery of the sources.'

For the Church to remain forever young and vibrant, not old and ossified, she has to combine both of these things.

She has to go back in her memory to Scripture and Tradition so that she can speak to the world of today.

And isn't that what Jesus in one of His Parables says we must do?

His Church has to be: "Like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Mt. 13: 52

For us, His Church, to be faithful to the Lord's commandment at the Last Supper to: 'Do this in memory of me.'

So that, when we eat His Body and drink His Blood, we proclaim His death until He comes again in glory, we have to be rooted into the source of our salvation, whilst living in the world today.

Now that may sound a bit complicated to achieve, and maybe only the reserve of the Clergy and theologians, but it isn't: it's simple.

It means that we must do what Peter says to Jesus in the Gospel: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." Jn. 6: 68 – 69

The place where we do this – the place where *aggiornamento*, and *ressourcement* are wedded together – is in the Eucharist.

And Peter's declaration of faith in Jesus comes at the end of the Lord's teaching in John's Gospel about the Eucharist, which we've listened to over the last few Sundays.

The Eucharist is where we do what Jesus tells us; we: 'Do this in memory of me.'

But not in order to keep alive a warm, glowing nostalgia for the moment when Jesus spoke those words to His Disciples at the Last Supper.

No; in the Eucharist we make present today what Jesus did at the Last Supper, on the Cross, and through the open door of the Empty Tomb two millennia ago.

In the Eucharist – the Mass – God remembers His binding promises to us, and calls us to do the same. Here, in the Eucharist, when we hear the Scripture read to us and have its meaning broken open to us in the sermon; when the bread and wine become His Body and Blood, we remember, we celebrate, we are part of an unbroken chain of Christians, going right back to Jesus Himself.

Even then: "Many of his disciples said, 'This is very hard to understand. How can anyone accept it?'"

Jn. 6: 60

For some today, just like those disciples of Jesus, find it's far too difficult to believe that this man, Jesus, said: "I am the bread of life. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever. [and] Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you cannot have eternal life within you."

Jn. 6: 48, 51 & 53

As Paul says in the second reading,: "No-one ever hates their own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the Church, because we are members of his body." Eph. 5: 29 – 30

Jesus loves us, His Church, with so much love that Paul equates it with love between a man and a woman in marriage.

He uses this illustration of marriage so that we can understand the Lord's love from our own human experience of love.

And yet, many Catholics have lost this sense of wonder and awe over the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

Lots of married couples renew the vows they made to one another on their wedding day when they reach a significant milestone in their life together.

At the Eucharist, let us renew our faith in, and love for Jesus.

He who is the Bread of Life; who nourishes us, and draws us to Himself through this Blessed Sacrament – now, and for life eternal.

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Jn. 6: 68