

Remember and Act

Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor, wrote dozens of books but may be best known for *Night*, an autobiographical account of his time as a teenager in the concentration camps at Auschwitz and Buchenwald.

The Nobel laureate committed his life to keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive. As a Jew, Wiesel knew the power of keeping memory. He understood the rabbis who said, “To remember is to give life; to forget is to let die.” He believed that by remembering the horrors of the Holocaust, humankind could never again repeat such an atrocity. Determined not to allow those who perished in the Holocaust to die in vain, he became a voice for the voiceless and a human rights advocate. He confronted hatred, bigotry, and intolerance and defended human dignity. He spoke out against the massacres in Bosnia and Rwanda and the burning of black churches in the United States. He championed the rights of blacks in South Africa and political prisoners in Latin America. For Wiesel, keeping memory and taking action were two sides of the same coin.

The relationship between keeping memory and taking action unfolds in our midst in each celebration of the liturgy. Memory is kept of the passion and death of Jesus, whose death atoned for our sins. And memory is kept of God’s power in raising Jesus from the dead. As Eucharistic Prayer IV states:

Therefore, O Lord,
as we now celebrate the memorial of
our redemption,
we remember Christ’s Death
and his descent to the realm of the dead,
we proclaim his Resurrection
and his Ascension to your right hand,
and, as we await his coming in glory,
we offer you his Body and Blood,
the sacrifice acceptable to you
which brings salvation to the whole world.



Keeping memory of the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ calls the faithful to act in the world.

Keeping memory of the death and Resurrection of Jesus calls us to act. It urges us to offer ourselves in sacrificial love. It asks us to refuse to allow the death of Jesus to be in vain. So we too must become voices for the voiceless and advocates for human rights. We too must confront hatred, bigotry, intolerance, and defend human dignity.

At the entrance to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, are Wiesel’s words “For the dead and the living, we must bear witness.” May we, who are nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ, be mindful of his death and Resurrection and bear witness to peace and justice for the dead and the living.

