

Memories

The Revd Murphy has chosen Remembrance as the theme for our assemblies this week. Father Philip will explain to you on Thursday why he selected this theme but this morning I would like to set the scene by talking about memories.

I wonder, can you remember your first memory? Cast your mind back to when you were young. What was that memory? Where were you? How old were you? Who was with you? We can all remember events in our past. Some people can go back to when they were very young while others might only remember something that happened when they were a little older. However, we do need to be careful when it comes to what we REALLY do remember. Often, a memory is based on what our parents or relatives have told us or a specific memory comes to mind only because we have a photograph of the event.

Memories embrace all facets of our lives. Memories include the good and the bad. Some memories last a few years and are then forgotten, other memories last a lifetime.

I am somewhat amused by the obsession of people in Hong Kong and elsewhere of taking photographs of the meal they are eating in a restaurant. Of course, this has only been the case since the arrival of the smart phone and ease with which you can take a photograph. However, not a meal in a restaurant seems to pass without somebody taking out their mobile phone and snapping away at the food on their plate. Sometimes this borders on the ridiculous. Why do people want to take photographs of their meal? Do they do this at home with a nice bowl of congee for breakfast?

However, taking photographs at a special meal can help you savour the moment in the months and years ahead. I can remember a meal when I did take a photograph of my dinner. The setting was a restaurant overlooking Neuschwanstein Castle in Bavaria, Germany. You might have heard of Neuschwanstein Castle; it was used by Walt Disney as the inspiration for the fairytale castle found at all Disneylands. The occasion was Christmas Day Dinner. In addition to the photograph, I have also the menu that was kindly given to me

by the waiter as a record of what I ate that day. In addition to enjoying each of the courses I took the time to identify the ingredients in each of the dishes; to pick out as many colours as I could on each plate; and to take in the aroma of each dish. Furthermore, as this was such a special occasion, I made sure that I also made a mental note of everything that was going on around me. Who were the other diners in the restaurant - families or couples, young or old, nationalities? What were the decorations on the tables and around the room - Christmas bells, candles, stars, tinsel? What music was playing - carols, organ music, German tunes? What was happening outside - was it cold, what is snowing, was it quiet? Taking my time to take in and appreciate the full dining experience made this a very special Christmas Day dinner and one that I shall always remember.

Although the digital age has enabled us to capture such moments the storing of our photographic memories has become a more problematic. There are so many methods of storing photos that the danger is that they might never be looked at again or if they are then only by you. I wonder how many photographs you have on your smart phone or computer that you have not looked at since the day you took the shot?

Last Wednesday, Professor Patrick Lau, an SPC alumnus, spoke to us about his career in architecture. One point that stood out in his address for me was his comment that when he travels he always takes a sketch book on his journeys. He did so as a young student of architecture and he continues to do so today. I imagine that all of us have taken hundreds of photographs of famous places and buildings that we have visited. Yet how much do we really remember of the detail, character and feel of each building? Taking a photograph might take us only a few seconds or at most a couple of minutes before we move on to the next photo opportunity. By taking out his sketch book, Professor Lau was able to take in the view before him and to draw the real character and unique qualities of a building. I have taken countless photographs of St. Paul's Cathedral in London yet if you asked me to describe the architectural design features of the building or its unique characteristics then I would be at a complete loss for words.

Another person who always records his observations is Sir David Attenborough. Attenborough is probably the world's most well-known maker of wildlife films and documentaries. He is 87 years of age, is still working and has a career in television that has surpassed 60 years. Attenborough has visited almost every country on Earth and studied all natural ecosystems. Like Professor Lau he records everything that he sees and experiences, not on a sketch pad but in a notebook. Over 60 years of notes has resulted in an amazing collection of records and enabled him to draw on his memory to connect his observations and findings.

It is important to keep memories alive. There are many examples to be found on the internet of ways to keep memories fresh. The photograph to the left on the screen shows a collection of glass jars, each containing a memory of a holiday. A summer spent near a beach or a winter camping in the forest (however, I would not agree with collecting a starfish, as in the jar at the back!). The photograph to the right captured my imagination. The boy's parents bought a large t-shirt and had his year of graduation from High School printed on the front. They put this over-sized t-shirt on their son the day he went to Kindergarten. They intend taking a photograph of him on the first day of each new school year until his graduation year in 2026. A lasting memory of how their son had grown.

“Your memory is your brain's filing system. It contains everything you have learnt. You can store an amazing amount of information – for example, as a child you learned around ten new words a day, and you may eventually know 100,000 or more.” (Science Museum, London)

A simple photograph can be priceless. I can remember clearly when this photograph of me was taken (I am the one on the left!). It was a bitterly cold winter in England and was taken at a park near my home. The snow left my hands frozen but the result of making a snowman was well-worth the toil and effort. That feeling of accomplishment provided a lasting memory.



"Memories are your identity. They ARE your life experiences, how you view the world, why you view the world in the way you do-- without memories, you don't know who you are." (Yahoo answers)

Treasure your memories.

Dr. J. Kennard