

# INTRODUCTION: MEMORY



The Summer 2023 issue of *Communio* is dedicated to the theme of “Memory.” Our longing to remember and be remembered forever expresses our natural attachment to the goodness of the world, motivates the articulation and preservation of culture, and is presupposed by faith’s rootedness in Christ and hope’s stretching forth toward everlastingly embodied glory in God. The theme turns us at once to the mystery of our God-relatedness and to our responsibility for giving corporeal shape to living practices and enduring works through which the truth can be communicated forward.

**D.C. Schindler**, in “Notes Toward the Definition of Memory,” addresses modernity’s ironic forgetfulness of memory and seeks to retrieve memory as the place of encounter with God. More than a faculty for mechanically registering events, which could be executed equally well by an instrument, memory, as Plato and Augustine both attest, is a power for personal presence to being as it precedes and inwardly draws the soul. Schindler relates this ontological account of memory to the Hebrew sense of remembrance as an obedient reenactment and efficacious renewal of the living God’s word of blessing, and, with reference to the Roman monument, argues for the embodied and public reality of recollection. “Memory is thus the abiding presence of God and of the things that matter, a presence that radiates from the things around us, the material culture that establishes our home in the world.”

**Mary Taylor** dwells on the pervasive motif of memory in Dante's *Divine Comedy* in "Three Rivers: Memory as Mediation and Mission in *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*." Recollecting and repenting his sin, the pilgrim Dante is transformed in his ascent through initiation into the mystical body's communal memory of God for the sake of his future mission of poetic testimony to divine love. The purification that he undergoes and his personal experience of ineffable mystery in the vision of the Trinity are, therefore, features of his role as a mediator of the sacred tradition. "[N]atural memory cleansed and renewed as part of healing confession in purgatory is surpassed in paradise, engulfed in God, suffused with grace, in order to become a channel for the living memory of Christ in his body extended through time, the Church."

In "*Memores Domini: Living God's Memory in a Post-Christian World*," **Antonio López** unfolds the meaning of Christian memory as a mindful adherence to God's calling presence, above all as God gives himself to us in Christ through the mediation of the Church. In light of Luigi Giussani's reception of the *Rule of St. Benedict*, López argues that such faithful remembrance is carried out in a whole life, one which serves the further communication of the very glory of divine love to which it attends. "When the *memor Domini* accepts the labor of living the memory of Christ at work, when he transforms what he is doing into an offering, he contributes, in ways that always elude his grasp, to the permanence and growth of the mystery of the Incarnation in history and thus bears witness to its beauty in the midst of the world."

In "The Third Greatest Commandment: Memory as Imperative, Defense, and Supplication," **Jason Peters** examines the exile's disastrous temptation to forget his fatherland and its patrimony, that "amnesia of the rich life-giving cultural, liturgical, historical, and religious endowment by which a people knows and understands itself and in accordance with which it undertakes the difficult, necessary, and inescapable task of rearing its children, lest that rich endowment be lost." Drawing on a diverse array of literary and theological sources, Peters brings to light the perennial threat of oblivion and ponders the desire to be remembered as a prayer for God's faithfulness. Memory, as Augustine illustrates, enables us to glimpse the ordering presence

of God in our lives, and, as Dostoevsky meditates upon in his *Brothers Karamazov*, opens us up to the hope of resurrection in God's own memory.

**Martin Mosebach**, in "On Art in Our Churches," observes that the Hebrew prohibition against images of God is upheld in Christianity because God himself has supplied his own definitive image in Jesus Christ. This confession stands behind the careful regulation of icons, which stands in marked contrast to the approach of secular religious art that emerged in the Renaissance. Unlike the masterpiece of a modern genius, "[u]nderneath some Greek icons, instead of a signature, there are the words, 'created by an unworthy hand.' This could also be engraved on the base of a Lourdes statue." Mosebach signals that a faithful return to the humble form of images that have always served the Church's worship can still guide the religious artist in our day.

**Mary Catherine Levri**, in "Creativity and Tradition: A Framework for Sacred Music," reflects on the paradox of originality in fidelity, focusing on the task of the sacred musician. "The alignment of the vision of the artist with the vision of the Church is not a matter of tradition stifling the identity of the artist, but of the artist allowing his own identity to be exchanged with that of the Lord." Commenting on three noteworthy compositions, Levri shows how the reverent incorporation of elements of liturgical tradition, here Gregorian chant, frees the unmistakable character of these pieces while serving to direct their listeners to the praise of God.

"We can hope that all will be well because that is how reality itself is made." **Ryan M. Brown** attends to Socratic recollection (*anamnesis*) as free of both sophistic presumption and misological despair in "On Reason and Hope: Plato, Pieper, and the Hopeful Structure of Reason." Rooting his approach in the thought of Josef Pieper, Brown proceeds to interpret key passages from the Platonic dialogues to show how Socrates exemplifies the loving desire to rest in the whole of truth in an openness that confidently awaits this gift from above, and how he thereby remains a model for the Catholic philosopher. □