

---

## Comment - Trafalgar and All Saints

**This week no matter where they were around the world, the Royal Navy marked the anniversary of Nelson's victory at Trafalgar - writes Houston McKelvey**

Once again I had the privilege of being a guest at the Trafalgar Night Dinner of HMS Hibernia, the local Royal Navy Reserve unit. I look on this night as the beginning of a season of remembrance running through to November 11.

A meal together and remembrance is at the very heart of the Christian story of salvation. Jesus sat down to eat with his friends in an upper room. He shared bread and wine with them and told them to do so whenever they met together. We may call it a eucharist, a mass, or the breaking of the bread, according to the differing perspectives of our churches. Biblically, the centrality of the meal as an act of remembrance is unavoidable.

It is this action which has nurtured and inspired Christ's followers over the years. Throughout the church's year we remember those premier league saints with feast days - all the apostles, and Irish saints like Brigid, Colman and Fin Barre. We have also added to this calendar of remembrance more modern people whose witness has been inspirational, like Dietrich Bonhoeffer the Lutheran pastor and theologian who was killed on the orders of Hitler a few weeks before the end of World War II. I have been inspired over the years by our remembrance of these giants of Christianity.

However, at the end of this month there is the feast day which for me is the most important personally. It is All Saints Day. It is the day when we remember those people who did not make the headlines but who faithfully followed Jesus. They are people who said their prayers, thought about the scriptures, and in their life and witness did their duty towards God and towards their neighbours gently and quietly. They got about God's business without fuss. Without them the church would have died out. Without them the church of today will cease.

When I think of All Saints Day, the words “significant others” are unavoidable. Each Christian in their life has been given personal gifts by God in the form of people who have been significant for them in their faith growth or who have stood by them in difficult times. These are the people I will be remembering once more on All Saints Day.

My list of significant others includes my parents who sacrificed to enable my education and that of our son. My scout leaders Bobby and Billy who provided me with fifteen years of friendship and support from I was eleven until I was ordained 14 years later. Billy, my housemaster at school, to whom I could take my anxieties.

Add the clergy in my home parish. The director of our church’s seminary in Dublin was gifted in matching the about-to-be- ordained with a rector who could best nurture further the skills of ministry. Canon John suggested I would meet Canon Robbie and in turn I had the good fortune of being his curate assistant in Dunmurry where I learned from a quiet, unassuming, pastor the basic skills of the conduct of public worship, and especially those services which mark particular events in parishioners’ lives.

Most of my significant others now stand in the innermost presence of God. Over All Saints tide I will again be thanking God for these folk. I invite you to identify the 'significant others' in your faith journey and to thank God for them in your prayers.

*First published in the News Letter, October 24, 2015*