

## ALL SAINTS

Today we celebrate the feast of all Saints. An occasion of great rejoicing in parts of the world not restricted by North European reserve.

This is the feast of the heroes of the Church. Mixed as it is with Roman Catholic traditions of mystery and legend. My father never let the truth get in the way of a good story, and in the past writers were much more concerned about theme, than they were about mere facts. (Which themselves can be selected to produce the required impression.)

A great example would be our own St George. This Turkish martyr of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century. Still revered by many in this country to be the patron Saint of England.

There is much confusion about the man who was said to have slayed the dragon.

Personally I like the story

Personally I like the legend.

Apocryphal or not it contains great truth.

St George faced the Dragon.

You will be obliged to face your own personal dragons.

It may be in the inevitable conflict with a strong personality at work or in the home

It may be a personal lack of confidence in the face of an obligation.

It may be in the fear disabling the courage to go on

Like St George you must face your dragons, because if you run away they only grow more powerful.

Then we have the confusion of the filtering of history. The rearrangement of truth in order to support the status quo. A great example of this is St Teresa of Avilla. This woman was born into a church which was in fear resulting from protestant reforms. It was corrupt and in great need of reformation. In the midst of this instability this Saint was persecuted by her own church. Told in 1576 that she was not to open any more convents, and forced to retire.

Pictures of this lady create an image of a compliant passive servant of the church.

Whereas, here was a feisty, courageous, and complex character.

A woman in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century's masculine world.

A woman who did not comply with the status quo.

A woman even on the edge of madness, who had a living faith, so powerful that she broke through the inhibitions and social restrictions of her time.

Where is a woman's place?

Where do we find St Teresa of Avila,

in the struggle

Then in the modern age  
Who dare not place in the litany of the saints Martin Luther King junior.  
This man was not Roman Catholic  
This man was not perfect  
Indeed modern investigative journalism will not allow us to romanticise the saints.  
But this man spoke truth to power  
This man was aware of the inevitability of his own martyrdom  
He spoke of seeing the Promised Land  
And although we still struggle  
He has gone on, ahead of us  
His words still ring out  
In this way  
In this way  
That one day all of Gods children  
Black men and white men  
Jews and gentiles  
Protestants and Catholics  
Will be able to join hands and sing the old Negro spiritual  
“Free at last, free at last”  
My God we are free at last.

Today we celebrate the Saints  
May we have the courage to take upon ourselves their example  
The wisdom to differentiate between what they did, and what is said about them  
And the joy  
The joy  
The pure joy  
Of the love of God.

