

## **CELEBRATION OF ALL SAINTS DAY – COLLEEN CLAYTON – SUNDAY 2<sup>ND</sup> NOVEMBER 2008**

Readings: Revelation 7:9-17, Ps34:1-10,22, 1 John 3:1-3, Matthew 5:1-12

I really like words. I enjoy using them to communicate, I am fascinated by the games that can be played with them, I feel moved by the way that they can help us to express something of this life we share. As part of my general word appreciation, I also like a good acronym. They are a great way of packing lots of meaning and layers into just one word that is easy to remember.

Just to see if you are on your toes today, I have prepared a short acronym quiz for you. Can you tell me what the following acronyms stand for?

NIMBY	Not In My Back Yard
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
LASER	Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads Of Government Meeting
KISS	Keep It Simple Stupid
SCUBA	Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus
POSH	Port Out Starboard Home

I have another that I recently discovered which you may not have heard before.

**HOPE**            Helping Other Possibilities Emerge.  
(The HOPE acronym comes from a handout that I often use at work and for anyone who is interested, I've brought a few copies for you to take home.)

Now you might be wondering what all these acronyms have to do with our celebration of All Saints Day. Well, when I was preparing for today it occurred to me that the word 'saint' seemed to lend itself to being an acronym. This is what I've come up with.

**A SAINT is:  
Someone who is Able to Imagine, Notice and Transform.**

Firstly, a SAINT is Someone who is Able to Imagine.  
Today's reading from Revelation contains beautiful imagery of God enthroned with the Lamb standing alongside and a vast multitude worshipping with joy. And the saints are a part of this vision. They stand before God, washed clean and shining in their robes of white. They have been through the great ordeal and now they will hunger no more and thirst no more and the Lamb will be their shepherd and will guide them to the springs of the water of life. What an amazing image. I think that part of being a saint is to take on the role of imagining the glory of God and letting that vision guide us through the ordeals of our lives.

A SAINT is also Someone who is Able to Notice.  
Often as a chaplain I see children who have got stuck in unhelpful ways of behaving. It might be that they are bullying others. Usually they are misbehaving in class. Often their whole way of being invites others to bully and mistreat them. One of the things that makes it so difficult for these children to change is that no-one notices their first, tiny attempts at difference and so they become discouraged and often, they give up and believe that it is hopeless to even try. I don't think it is only children who experience this.  
So I believe that the role of a saint is to notice and celebrate as many little steps towards wholeness as possible. We need to notice signs of wholeness in ourselves, in others and in our world and when we notice those signs we need to tend them so that they grow.

And finally, a SAINT is someone who is able to transform. Today's Gospel reading tells us that several unlikely selections of people are blessed; the poor in spirit, those who mourn, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. It is not these people's circumstances that make them blessed. They are blessed because God's love transforms human brokenness into abundance and eternal life.

The role of the saint is to be transformed by God's love and also to play a part in bringing that transformative love into the world and making it real.

So as we celebrate All Saints day, I encourage us all to go into the world and practise being saints. In the words of today's reading from 1<sup>st</sup> John, "*Beloved, we are God's children now; what we **will** be has not yet been revealed.*" I think that we will discover something of what we **will** be as each of us works to become a Someone who is Able to Imagine, Notice and Transform.

Amen.

Colleen Clayton