

## **A Reflection from a St Mary's Churchwarden (Charles Wilson)**

The captain of the good ship Cap Finistère won't let us go on deck right now, as it's too windy and too wet. So I'm in the cabin quietly 'reflecting' on the laptop. We've just been to visit some elderly Spanish friends in Barcelona, and are now returning across the Bay of Biscay. My older and remaining motorbike "Gloria" is in the hold. She faithfully took us on many European tours from 2007, before the bigger, more comfortable bike (alas, no more) arrived three years ago. So Gloria been re-commissioned for touring.

Julia and I have a funny knack (unwittingly) of asking to stay with our Spanish friend just when a major Saints Day occurs, and the place goes mad with festivities - mind you, the Spanish do celebrate a lot of saints, don't they? We invited ourselves to stay with her in Tarragona two years ago on the very day the city reached its climax in celebrating its patron saint, Santa Tecla. Then, this past week we arrived in Zaragoza, only to find it was their annual festival of El Pilar, in honour of the Virgin Mary "our Lady of the Pillar". (Apparently St James was praying in AD 40 and Mary appeared to him, presenting a column/pillar of jasper, telling him to construct a church in her honour). It is now a huge civic event, with thousands in the streets, and a massive mountain of flowers 30 feet high beside the Cathedral-Basilica. Beautiful scents, and many dressed in traditional costumes.

Why do they take their Saints (or saints) so seriously, I wonder? Or, let's ask - why don't we? If we had, perhaps All Hallows (Saints) would not have been overtaken by the irreligious celebrations of Hallowe'en, the evening before.

There are over 100 references in the Bible to 'saints' throughout both Old and New Testaments, meaning those persons (saints) who worship God. When the apostle Paul is addressing ordinary believers in the churches he calls them saints (not Saints!). So you too are a saint, if you confess Christ. More reflections on this perhaps from our lay Reader on All Saints Sunday, in St Mary's.

But of course, few believers are officially recognised as Saints. Over the years, some most worthy proponents of faith have been celebrated, Saint Teresa of Calcutta being a well-known and recent example. We could, legitimately and biblically, do this with anyone who dies in the Christian faith, but we'd face a practical problem. The church calendar is already full of Saints from by-gone eras. Too many to be able to add many more 'saints', realistically.

So we now group our remembrance of saints into a single occasion, namely All Souls' (Hallows) Sunday. Strangely, our Spanish friend is called "Pilar". So the El Pilar celebration day started in her flat early in Barcelona with friends ringing, and finished late evening some 250 miles away, thanks to our Gloria.

Oh, and most significantly of all, we hope to be interviewing a saint (as defined above!) for the post of Rector on All Hallows Eve. More on that, maybe, next month. Please keep praying for him or her. Many thanks.