

Remembrance



Have you noticed that virtually every day of the year is dedicated to some or other cause, and not just saints as per the Roman Catholic Church calendar? We now have a week for x and a month for y, the most notable being 'Black History Month' in October. The first part of November is Remembrance season with 1 November being 'All Souls' Day' and 'Remembrance Day' on 11 November.

We clearly have a need to remember both the past and 'things' in the present. But is our remembrance inclusive and should it be? How many in our multi-cultural world feel excluded because they're not Black but still a minority? How many do not associate with the red poppy which is a symbol of war and the British Empire/Commonwealth? On the latter issue we have red, white, purple, yellow and black poppies – all making their own statement around the same event. Today there are no veterans left from that first global war and many of the second are dying out too. I regularly hear 'what will happen when the last World War 2 veteran dies? Will we continue with 11 November services?' And what of those caught up in conflict situations today who are not in the armed forces? Are they included in these acts of remembrance of wars gone by?

A recent encounter with an organisation whose job it is to foster remembrance, made me question what inclusive means. The organisation believes it is inclusive as it mentions the right things and groups of people. Yet I know groups of people do not feel engaged. They give it lip-service as it's the politically correct thing to do. However, a connection made at a personal (or national) level, results in a new confidence and assurance – they belong and have been recognised for who they are; it's not a blanket approach. Finding the right trigger can be time consuming and requires trust and understanding of the 'other'.

It reminds me of Isaac Newton's statement 'we build too many walls and not enough bridges'. How often in our trying to build bridges do we actually build walls? To build genuine bridges, we need to approach the other side with an openness of mind and anticipation that we're not there to show the other side what to do, but rather to engage in a conversation and journey of discovery. And along that path we generally find common ground. That for me is what remembrance is about – irrespective of the day.

AS, 21 October 2018