

April 29th Daily Devotional:

On our afternoon tea call on Sunday someone asked me what I missed most about Belfast. I responded saying “nights out.” Now, maybe that is my longing to go to a restaurant speaking, but I do think it’s deeper than that. There is a real spirit in Belfast on a night out: a spirit of courage and resiliency. Actually, that pretty much sums up Belfast at any time of day.

Most of us who grew up in Northern Ireland remember a time when it was much riskier to be in Belfast. We remember the searches and the road blocks. One night in December around 10 years ago, I was out for dinner in Belfast when the police came into the restaurant to tell us there was a bomb alert in the area. Most of us sighed because we thought those days were behind us. Then someone said, “I really don’t want my dinner to be interrupted.” The police told us how far we had to go to be in the safe zone. So, with the help of the restaurant staff, many of us carried our tables and meals outside - setting up a mini outdoor restaurant on a Belfast winter night. Courage and resiliency.

This morning a friend posted the photo below from their morning walk through the deserted streets of Belfast. Joel coupled it with this statement, “No matter what gets thrown at this place, its people carry on. Always have, always will.” I know that each of you share that spirit too. I think New Yorkers and Belfast-ers have some of that spirit in common. So, let that C.S. Lewis (a Belfast man) quote from the artwork sink in this morning, “Courage, dear heart.”

This quote comes from *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* in the *Chronicles of Narnia* series. At this point of the book the group are on a ship, in unknown waters, and they feel like Aslan has left them. Lucy whispers, “Aslan... if ever you loved us, send help now.” C.S. Lewis continues, “The darkness did not grow any less, but she began to feel a little ... better.” Aslan did not appear, there were no roars from the lion’s mouth, but Lucy heard a whisper saying, “Courage, dear heart.”

Friends may you too hear that whisper this morning, “Courage, take heart.” Will you pray with me this prayer written by another Belfast dweller, Pádraig Ó Tuama?

Courage comes from the heart
and we are always welcomed by God,
the Croí* of all being.

We bear witness to our faith,
knowing that we are called
to live lives of courage,
love and reconciliation
in the ordinary and extraordinary
moments of each day.

We hear witness, too, to our failures,
and our complicity in the fractured if our world.

May we be courageous today.
May we learn today.
May we love today.
Amen.

*Croí means heart in Irish.

**Photo by Joel Neill.

