

**Eileen Kennedy RIP**

**Funeral Mass**

**Rathdowney Church**

**Tuesday 15th December 2020**

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Kennedy (Árd Bhaile, Mayfield, Cork and formerly Rossmore, Errill, Co. Laois), on December 10th 2020, unexpectedly following an accident; Eileen (Punk), beloved daughter of Sally and the late Joe and loving sister of Michael, Ann, Catherine and Josephine. Sadly missed by her heartbroken mother and siblings, her partner Martin, nieces, nephews, brother-in-law John, Josephine's partner Robbie, Michael's partner Bernie, Ann's partner Noel, aunts, uncles, relatives and a large circle of friends.

### **Homily**

In Ireland we have many age old customs which have served us so well at the time of the death of a loved one. For the most part, before Covid 19 hit our shores on the last day of February this year, we took these customs for granted, being able to sit at a bedside, to hold a hand, to kiss a loved one good bye, to have a wake in the presence and face of the loved one who has died, to embrace or at least shake hands with the bereaved, to turn up in droves at the funeral, to gather afterwards to break bread, to reminisce and share the familiar stories. We have all participated in these rituals perhaps hundreds of times and more significantly, most if not all of us have also been at the receiving end of these same rituals and we know how important and how powerful those simple gestures were in helping us to cope with the loss of our loved ones. But for the past ten months these significant gestures of healing have been absent from all of our lives. For all of you here in the church today and many others who join us on the webcam, since you heard the dreadful news of Eileen's tragic death last Thursday evening, you too have had to live through these dreadful days without many of those expressions of support and healing.

During these months, one of the new ways people have discovered as a means of showing support and sympathy is to write on the condolence

page of RIP.ie. Most people leave a short message of condolence but others also take the time to share a little memory about the person who has died and how much that person meant to them. Last night I read down through the messages left about Eileen and it helped me to build up a picture of the young woman we honour with Christian burial today. Here are some of the words and phrases I picked out from those heartfelt messages left by some of Eileen's many friends.

*she had a heart of gold.*

*Eileen you were such a beautiful soul, and always very good to me*

*Eileen you were a beautiful person, always had a smile on your face and you brightened up so many lives with your infectious laugh and love. I hope you fly high with the angels. You will be so so sadly missed always,*

*She was the loveliest girl with a gentle heart and a smile for everyone*

*You warmed us all with your unique style & I'll always remember your fabulous smile...you lit up the city. Rest in sweet peace girl.*

*Though your days here were brief, Your spirit was live, awake, complete" I will never forget you and your amazing spirit. Cork has lost a great free spirit who added an abundance of colour and wit to day to day life in the city.*

*Eileen you will be sorely missed Your energy, your joyful smile and compassion you had for everyone you met on your travels will be eternally grateful and missed.*

*To my soul sister. Going to miss your laugh, wit, kindness and most of all you. Life won't be the same now*

*You always went your own way. Rest in peace.*

Then Catherine, I got further insight from your lovely introduction at the Mass in Mayfield yesterday morning. And Catherine I know you are going to speak about Eileen at the end of mass today so I don't want steal your words. I would just like to borrow and highlight two words or phrases from what you said as way for me to in some way celebrate Eileen's life.

One of the comments Catherine made which was probably very revealing was that 'Eileen didn't conform to the norm' that phrase echoed one of the comments a friend had written on the condolence page when he wrote; Eileen, *You always went your own way.* That independent, non-conformist streak was I think also

linked to her love of Punk music a passion which earned her the name 'Punk'. That led me to look up what I could about Punk music and the Punk culture. I came across an article entitled; 'The top Punk quotes'

*"Why should I care what other people think of me? I am who I am. And who I wanna be."*  
— Avril Lavigne

*"She can be a nightmare, but this still feels better than any dream."*

*"I had chosen the path of the black sheep rather than that of the unicorns and puppies."*

*"Punk rock should mean freedom, liking and excepting anything that you like. Playing whatever you want. As sloppy as you want. As long as it's good and it has passion."*  
— Kurt Cobain

*"I've always been spiritual but I've never had a proper context, and it took me a while to find the proper context. It's hard to realize you can have any kind of relationship with God you want... and so I now have a punk rock relationship with God"*

And then I saw Catherine you listed some of Eileen's favourite Punk and Rock bands and I have to admit the only one I was somewhat familiar with was The Sex Pistols. And I was reminded of their version of 'My Way' which starts off very like Frank Sinatra's original song but then switches into some lyrics which I would not get away with quoting even at Eileen's funeral. But I can see how Eileen might have liked that song with words like.....

*Regrets and I've had a few  
But then again, too few to mention  
I did what I had to do  
I saw it through without exemption  
I've planned each charted course  
Each careful step along the highway  
And more, much more than this  
I did it my way*

One of the other words which Catherine used to describe her sister was the word 'empathy' and I was taken back to some of those words spoken by Eileen's friends like 'heart of Gold' 'beautiful soul' 'gentle heart' 'compassion'. Where did Eileen develop those qualities. Well I have no doubt many of them were picked up at home on the farm in Rossmore with her parents Sally and Joe. I was also struck by the fact that after her leaving cert Eileen chose to go and work at Our Lady's

hospice in Harolds Cross. Caring for those with a terminal illness is not easy work to do for anyone and for a young teenage woman to choose that, was an expression of both the independent and the compassionate Eileen coming together.

And so I hope this little reflection in some way celebrates the life of a young woman whose life was so cruelly cut short in Cork last Thursday. I'm conscious that those of you who knew Eileen all of her life and all of your lives will know that these words don't encapsulate all of Eileen's journey. Like all of us she knew the Joyful, Glorious but also the Sorrowful mysteries of life. She had her challenges and struggles and demons too. You can really only have empathy with those who struggle when you have faced some of those same struggles yourself.

As we gather here today to welcome Eileen home to the community where she grew up, we do so to commend her soul to the merciful love of God. I'm sure God understands what it means for someone to have a Punk Rock relationship with Him even if we don't. We give Eileen back to Him today. Eileen also goes to be reunited with her beloved dad. As a child Joe trained her to be a cross country runner so perhaps it is appropriate that she should be the first of his daughters to join him and I'm sure he will be there waiting for her at the finishing line today.

Sally, Michael, Ann, Catherine and Josephine our hearts and our sympathies go out to you today. Even though Anne assures me that Eileen would love all the colour in here for the funeral which has echoes of her various hairstyles over the years, especially that great blast of pinky purple behind me. Nevertheless it seems even more unfair that we are surrounded by the reminders of the joy of Christmas on a day when you say farewell to your daughter and sister and aunt and friend.

I will leave you with some words of song recorded by another of Eileen's favourite Bands The Cure and their lead singer Robert Smith. If Eileen had had a chance to say goodbye to you these might well have been her words;

However far away  
I will always love you  
However long I stay  
I will always love you  
Whatever words I say  
I will always love you  
I will always love you

Eileen May you Rest in Peace

