

Sister Aloysius Tighe RIP
Funeral Mass
Sallyville, Wexford
13th February 2021

Formerly of Kylemalawn, Errill, Laois. Deeply regretted by her community, her sisters Sr Mary, and Anne (Kieran), nieces, nephews, grandnieces, grandnephews, relatives, and friends.

Predeceased by her sisters Maura Breda, Teresa, Angela, Sr Agatha, Sr Dympna, and brother Paddy.

There's a song that Tommy Makem used to sing called the "Parting Glass". It's about a man who at the end of his days "sits beside the road and weeps for all the songs he didn't sing and the promises he didn't keep" Life is about songs and promises, those we sing and don't sing, those we keep and don't keep. And out of the songs and promises of life we quarry our own unique existence in this world. Today as we gather here in Sallyville for Sr. Aloysius Tighe's funeral liturgy we thank God for the songs and promises that have gone to make up Aloysius' ninety years, sixty eight of them as a Sister of St. John of God.

Aloysius was born in Kylemalawn, Errill in the Parish of Rathdowney on the 4th of November 1930. She was one of ten children born to John and Teresa Tighe. Having checked our parish baptismal records last night I saw that she was baptised two days later on the 6th of November, the Feast of All the Irish Saints. The name given to her at her Baptism was Margaret but within her family she is known as Rita. Aloysius' father was from County Mayo and he had come to live and work in Portlaoise. There he was to meet and marry Teresa Delaney from Skeirke, Borris In Ossory who was also working in Portlaoise. Having decided to move out of the town they considered either buying a pub or a farm. The decision was made when the farm at Kylemalawn became available for purchase. Having moved into the heart of the country they did not even know where the nearest church was. On their first Sunday in Kylemalawn they set out for Mass and simply followed their neighbours as they all made the journey together up the Mass Path to

Grogan church. Yesterday afternoon I went with Sr. Anita O'Leary on a little pilgrimage to remember Aloysius and to honour the roots of her faith and her vocation. We went to Grogan Church where she had been baptised and then travelled the little narrow road which runs along what was that ancient Mass Path which her parents and herself and her siblings walked so many times. We went by her home in Kylemalawn and ended up at Errill Church where the Baptismal Font from Grogan now stands. I was reminded of a beautiful poem written by a local man, Andy Dowling in Errill simply called The Mass Path: Part of it reads;

A narrow road amongst the trees
Mid summer's sun and winter's breeze
The fervent people come
The old go slow, the young run fast
Until their goal is reached at last
The gates of God's own home.....

Eight of John and Teresa Tighe's ten children were to be born in Kylemalawn and Rita was one of them. From her home in Kylemalawn she walked a good mile each day to school in Errill. She was later to win a scholarship to the Presentation Secondary School in Mounmellick. After school Rita was called to the Civil Service where she worked for three years with Revenue Commissioners. It is interesting how the language of vocation was applied to so many jobs in the past. You were 'called' to the Civil Service and the bank and so many other professions. I'm not sure if it was because Tax Collectors didn't have a particularly good press in the Gospels but after those three years with the Revenue Commissioners, Rita became very aware of another 'calling' in her life. In 1953 Rita was to follow in the footsteps of her three older sisters and entered the St. John of God Order.

I have reflected in these days about what it was that drew Rita away from a very full life of dancing, socialising and a passion for sport. How did that call of God become so strong and so compelling that she had to follow it. Was it that three of her sisters had entered before her? Was it that her gran-aunt had been a Mother General in this congregation for 23

years. I'm sure that may have had some bearing and it was certainly obvious that a religious vocation was something to be welcomed among those many faithful and fervent people who walked the Mass Path from Kylemalawn to Grogan every Sunday morning. But I believe it was much more than all of that. And maybe the clue can be found in the scripture and the liturgy of today's Mass. Every text of Aloysius' funeral Mass speaks of a woman who utterly trusted in her God, she trusted in His plan for her life, She loved Him with every fibre of her being but perhaps even more importantly Aloysius utterly believed that God loved her to bits. And so we have heard and will hear amazing words and lines like; Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name, you are mine. No matter what happens....I will be with...You are precious in my eyes; You are honoured and I love you.....The Lord is my Shepherd, There is NOTHING I shall want.....If I should walk in the Valley of Darkness, no evil would I fear.....Think of the love the Father has lavished on us, by letting us be called God's children: for that is what we are.....Do Not let your hearts be troubled... Trust in God still and trust in me. In the Communion Hymn we will hear.. I have carried you on eagles wings.. I will care for you in all your years...Never need I be afraid, No matter how uncertain things may be, Sometimes thru me, sometimes in spite of me...You seem to find purpose in my Life

If even a fraction of that incredible awareness of God was there in Rita Tighe's life back in 1953, then The Department of Finance didn't stand a chance of holding on to this brilliant young recruit in the Revenue Commissioners.

No matter how uncertain things may be, Sometimes thru me, sometimes in spite of me...You seem to find purpose in my Life

Well God certainly found much purpose in Aloysius' life. Having joined the St. John of God Order, Aloysius trained to be a teacher and spent much of her life working in Kilkenny, Wexford, Edenderry and her home parish of Rathdowney where she taught in the local Vocational School for almost 11 years. In recent days I have spoken to a number of her past pupils who remember her with

enormous respect and gratitude. But if I may I would like to say something about what Sr. Aloysius did after she retired as a teacher.

Last week on The Feast of The Presentation of Our Lord The New Archbishop of Dublin, Dermot Farrell, celebrated his first Mass in the Pro Cathedral. The Feast of The Presentation is also the World Day For Consecrated Life. In a tribute to all Religious Men and Women he made the following comment:

The women and men who dedicate their lives to the call of the gospel are at the heart of life of our Church. Without their service, without the presence of their communities, our church would be a very different Church. They have been at the forefront of renewal in the Church, taking bold initiatives, and making significant sacrifices, putting flesh on the hope that was within them (see 1 Peter 3:15). This is not a mission that belongs to the past. In another age, they were at the forefront of addressing the educational, social, and health of those who risked being left behind. Today they continue their prophetic ministry in the service of those whom our society might prefer not to see:

When I first came to know Aloysius almost twenty years ago I was working in Kilkenny City. Part of my ministry brought me to a community home for adults with special Needs. I went there to celebrate Mass but Aloysius came regularly and quietly to help in whatever way she could...in the service of those whom our society might prefer not to see.

At the same time Aloysius had approached the City Vocational School in the Kilkenny to offer her services. Remedial and Learning support teachers were not yet available in many schools. The Kilkenny Vocational School had among it's students, children and teenagers from the poorest and most socially deprived homes in the city. These were the students Aloysius spent her time with. In recent days I have spoken to two of the staff members from the Vocational school who worked alongside Aloysius. They both spoke of the incredible bond and relationship she formed with some of the most challenging students. Again it was Aloysius' ministry in the service of those whom our society might prefer not to see:

Last night I had a text from the former Principal of The Kilkenny Vocational School and she wrote

Sr. Aloysius was a lady, a treasure to have in our school community. She was so respectful of the children and they loved the help and support she gave to them.

She just popped in every day , never put in or out on anyone, gelled with the staff in a very unassuming way ...she was just a joy to meet. I thanked God the day she came over to offer her services as a volunteer in the learning support department. She will be remembered fondly by our school community, parents , students, staff and by me

I can recall some years ago hearing an interview with a well known religious sister from County Kerry. In the interview the sister was talking about the influences that helped her to respond to the call of Religious Life. She spoke about something her father said to her as a young child *Tóg go bog é agus bogfaidh sé chugat. (Tog go bug e, agus buggy se cuait)* The essence of her father's message was that if we say 'Yes' to life and not resist or fight it, then life will come freely, gently and fully. Margaret, Rita, Sr. Aloysius Tighe definitely said a very big "YES" to life, she did not resist it or fight it and because of that her life was lived, freely, gently and fully, sixty eight years of which as a St. John of God Sister

In saying and living that YES Aloysius had a perfect role model, Mary of Nazareth, to whom she had an extraordinary devotion all her life. It came as no surprise to many of us that Aloysius died on the 11th of February, The Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. The timing can hardly have been a co-incidence. I thought of how many times Aloysius would have prayed the Hail Mary which ends with 'Pray for us sinners Now and at the Hour of our death Amen' For Sr. Aloysius, that hour has now come and as we gather today we give thanks for the many years of saying Yes to Life, Saying Yes to God and for the many ways He found purpose in her life. We give thanks today for the countless young lives she has touched and blessed. But most of all today we gather to accompany you Aloysius on your final journey to the Father's House

May Mary and Saints and Angels lead you on, escorting you where Christ has gone. Now He has called you, come to Him who sits above the seraphim. Come to the Peace of abraham and to the supper of the Lamb. Come to the glory of the Blessed ant to Perpetual Light and Rest. Amen

