

Kathleen Butler RIP
Funeral Mass
Rathdowney Church
Holy Thursday 1st April 2021

Kathleen Butler (nee King), Coolfin, Rathdowney, Co. Laois, March 30th, 2021. Peacefully, in the tender care of the nurses and staff of Portlaoise Hospital. Predeceased by her husband Gerard. Sadly missed by her sons Peter, John and Edward, daughters-in-law Margaret and Geraldine, grandchildren Lisa, Julie-Anne and Eileen, great-grandchildren Emily, Jonathan, Braden, Jessica and Cade, her sisters Rose and Mary, brothers-in-law Tony and Ken, nephews, nieces, neighbours, relatives and a wide circle of friends.

One of the things I'm very conscious of is that when somebody dies in a community like ours then that person in some way moves into the spotlight even if that is only for a few short days. Neighbours and extended family members automatically begin to share their stories and memories of the person who has died and their relationship and contact with them. The contribution which the deceased person has made to their community is highlighted and remembered. One of the very difficult things about this past year is that we have not been able to share the stories and the memories with each other in the way we would like to.

Nevertheless I'm sure for you who are Kathleen's family will have the experience in these days of people contacting you in person by phone, by text or through the condolence page of RIP.ie. They will want to sympathise with you, to support you but they will also want to share with you something of how they remember your mam. There will be those who remember her as a neighbour and friend, those she met on her weekly shopping trips to Roscrea, there will be those who remember her for involvement in community groups like The Country Markets and the ICA. There will be those who remember Kathleen as the person who thought them how to crochet. There will be those who remember her from the annual pilgrimages to Knock, something which I know Kathleen did almost every year since she was a young girl. There will be

those who remember Kathleen from her time growing up in Cullahill and because her father was a blacksmith people will speak of her love of and life-long interest in horses. And while she may have grown up in Cullahill those who knew her well will testify that she was a staunch supporter of all things Tipperary because she had been born on Tipperary soil in Roscrea. But there is another unique group of people possibly living in every county in Ireland who will have cause to remember and be grateful to Kathleen Butler. Many of the people in that group may not even know of Kathleen's death but if they did, they would simply want to say a prayer of gratitude for her. I'm speaking of the countless people who over the years travelled from every part of Ireland to seek out Kathleen's healing hand for particular ailments. Kathleen I understand was entrusted with a gift of healing which had been handed on to her many years ago. She was part of a rich tradition in Ireland known as Folk cures. At the heart of that healing gift was the use of a simple cross made from straw. The person in need of healing was blessed with the little cross and then that cross had to be buried. When the cross rotted or disintegrated only then the healing would occur.

The first reading today spoke of a time to be born and a time to die. This week is Kathleen's time to die. And what a week to die, Holy week. At the heart of this week is that same symbol which Kathleen used over the years in her work of healing, the cross. But also at the heart of the story of this week is the mystery where something has to die, to be buried in the ground so that new life can come, new healing can happen. These days of Holy Week will end with the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday. But there can be no Easter Sunday, no resurrection, no new life, no healing without going through the pain and the dying of Good Friday. It is the mystery of nature that Jesus speaks about in the gospel today. But I would also suggest it is the very same mystery that was at the heart of what Kathleen did every time she exercised that gift of healing which had been handed down to her.

So if I might suggest to you, Kathleen's family, while at the human level you are saddened and heartbroken by the loss of this very special person in your life, this week, this time, This Holy Week is really a most

appropriate time for your sister, your mother your grandmother, your great grandmother to be called home by her God.

With St. Paul in that second reading Kathleen can say, The time of my departure has come, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race and I have kept the faith.

Kathleen, May your soul rest in Peace.