

**Bobby Carroll RIP**  
**Funeral Mass**  
**Errill Church**  
**Monday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021**

*Bobby Carroll, The Derries, Knockahaw, Errill, Co. Laois, 28<sup>th</sup> of May 2021. Peacefully at home surrounded by his loving family, predeceased by his sister Sadie and son-in-law Ger Maher. Deeply regretted by his loving and devoted wife Ann, daughters Anne, Catherine, Jackie, Lisa and Teresa, sons Robert and Philip, brothers Martin and Jack, sister Patricia, grandchildren, Katie, Louise, Denis, Carol, Jack, Padraic, Kate, Mike, Aíne, Kaylee, Emma, Aoife, Shane, Matthew, Cian, Luke, Alex, Zara, Darci and Robbie, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, nephews, nieces, relatives and friends.*

*Readers: Cait and Teresa, Prayer: Katie, Kaylee, Jack, Shane, Louise, Denis*

Over the last few days I have had an opportunity to reflect a little on the life and death of this man who we honour with Christian burial today. There were a few things that stood out for me. On Saturday evening as I turned down the road that leads to The Derries and even though it was 9pm I was blinded by the magnificent evening sunshine. I was thinking of how you had spoken about how much your dad Bobby loved the sunshine and when he couldn't find it here he loved to fly to the sun, be that in Spain or Turkey or wherever. It is ironic and strangely appropriate that the days since Bobby died have been the brightest and warmest days of this year. I also thought that it was somewhat ironic that Bobby died on the day that the Government announced that we can all fly to the Sun later this summer. Perhaps Bobby had a little part to play in that. As he left this world for the Eternal Light of Heaven he shared a little of that Light and sunshine with all of us.

Another thought that struck me was that the last week of bobby's life began on Sunday the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May, his 81<sup>st</sup> birthday, He was to die five days later on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May. In between those two dates was another

very important anniversary. On Tuesday last the 25<sup>th</sup> of May it was exactly 81 years since Bobby was baptised in Grogan Church at that font over there. Baptism ceremonies, as you know are not very long and I suspect back in 1940 with a baby who was only two days old the ceremony would have even shorter. But no matter how short it was the most essential words spoken at Bobby's baptism as at every baptism was one short sentence when the priest, pouring water on his head said, Robert Carroll I baptise you in the name of the Father and of The Son and of The Holy Spirit. And as he grew up in Clonboo with his granny, in The Derries with his parents, whatever church he went into, whether it was Templetuohy, Grogan, this church in Errill for the last fifty years, the churches he went to mass in when he was working in Limerick or in England. I would be fairly confident that every time Bobby entered a church he dipped his hand in a Holy Water font and blessed himself in The name of The Father and The Son and The Holy Spirit. Each time he did that it was as a reminder of what happened at that font over there on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 1940. And last Wednesday when I visited Bobby. He was very weak and no longer really able to speak. But for the few minutes I was with him and as I prayed with him he repeatedly lifted his right hand to again make that gesture, that unspoken prayer in the name of the Father and The Son and The Holy Spirit. And if it was appropriate that the sun has shone so brightly in the days since Bobby died then it was also appropriate that these have also been the days when we have celebrated the Feast of The Trinity, The Father The Son and The Holy Spirit.

As I reflected further on what Ann and all of you had shared with me about your dad I was reminded of a lovely reflection which you might be familiar with. It is called the Dash

## **The Dash**

by Linda Ellis

I read of a man who stood to speak  
at the funeral of a friend.

He referred to the dates on the tombstone  
from the beginning...to the end.

He noted that first came the date of birth  
and spoke of the following date with tears,  
but he said what mattered most of all  
was the dash between those years.

For that dash represents all the time  
that they spent alive on earth.  
And now only those who loved them  
know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own,  
the cars...the house...the cash.  
What matters is how we live and love  
and how we spend our dash.

So, think about this long and hard.  
Are there things you'd like to change?  
For you never know how much time is left  
that can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough  
to consider what's true and real  
and always try to understand  
the way other people feel.

And be less quick to anger  
and show appreciation more  
and love the people in our lives  
like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect  
and more often wear a smile,  
remembering that this special dash

might only last a little while.

So, when your eulogy is being read,  
with your life's actions to rehash...  
would you be proud of the things they say  
about how you spent YOUR dash?

The two dates which may in time appear on Bobby's tombstone are as already mentioned, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 1940 and the 28<sup>th</sup> of May 2021. In between those two dates is a little dash which for Bobby represents almost 81 years of life

*"What matters is how we live and love  
and how we spend our dash."*

Well how did Bobby Carroll spend his dash? Those of you here who have known Bobby all of your lives as a brother, as a husband, as a father, as a grandfather, as a neighbor and friend will all answer that question in your own way. When I asked you the other day to think of a word or a phrase which best described your dad I heard things like 'He was a peace maker' 'He wouldn't hurt a fly' A man, slight of build but with great physical strength who embraced hard work and was meticulous in his approach to all the important areas of his life. And despite that physical strength he was soft and gentle in his dealings with you, his family and with those he encountered. I heard of a man who had an attitude of gratitude and was deeply appreciative for the smallest kindness done to him. As I listened to you speak so lovingly of this man who has had such a powerful and positive influence in all of your lives I thought of three words. And while I suspect Bobby Carroll was not a man given much to swearing those three words are all 'F' words; Farming, Faith and Family. The man we honor with Christian burial today has spent his 81 years of life moving seamlessly through those three words. I have already spoken a little about that very simple but very strong Faith which in many ways began at that font over there. In his life, Bobby was part of two families, the one he was born into and the one he created with you Ann. I was very struck by his early experience of family life. The long term illness of his mother, leaving school at 14 to

help out at home, going away to Limerick and to England to work and gain experience of farming, the call again to come back home to support his parents, the death of his mam at 51 when Bobby, the oldest of five was only in his mid twenties. Taking on the more responsibilities both inside the house and on the farm, helping his younger siblings and taking particular care of Martin. It is probably very difficult to fully appreciate the influence those early experiences of illness, of loss, of taking on such responsibility had on Bobby's young life and how they formed his character and approach to life. In 1975 Bobby was to meet you Ann and when you came to The Derries you shared that journey of care and responsibility with him. Through the Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious mysteries of 45 years of marriage, seven children and twenty grandchildren, you have created precious memories, and the pain and the sadness you and your family feel today is because of the enormous love you have all shared together. Today and many days to come will be very difficult for all of you who are Bobby's family but I would like to share with you something a priest friend of mine said at his own father's funeral;

we bury his body, but not his spirit;  
we bury his hands, but not his good deeds;  
we bury his heart, but not his love;  
we bury his head, but not his memories .

Bobby was born into the soil of The Derries almost eighty one years ago and ever since he has remained very close to it. Bobby worked on the land and assisted it to produce much fruit year after year. He was a grounded person and that quality combined with his strong Faith helped Bobby to face the storms and trials of farming and of life in general. Being so close to nature all his life Bobby too must have often reflected on the mystery of nature which Jesus spoke about in another gospel passage. The seed is sown in the ground and before new life can come the seed must first die. That mystery of nature is also at the heart of our Christian Faith, a Faith which Bobby Carroll cherished and nourished throughout his life. AS I think back again to last Wednesday

and how although very weak Bobby used every little bit of strength to raise his hand to bless himself in the name of the Father Son and Holy Spirit then I know those words of St. Paul in the second reading today are so appropriate for you Bobby as you leave us *“The time for your departure has come, you have fought the good fight, you have finished the race and you have certainly kept the Faith.....now indeed there is a crown of righteousness reserved for you”*

Bobby, May your gentle soul rest in Peace.