

**Liam Walsh RIP**  
**Funeral Mass**  
**Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

Died 13th May 2021 Peacefully in his 96th year surrounded by his loving family. Devoted husband of Catherine who pre-deceased him on the 19th February 2021. Loving father to Kevin, Edward, Seamus (Died 1979) and Lena. Adored grandfather of Catherine, Lydia, Alasdair, James, Evlin, Elanor, Harry, Kate, Constance, Jane, John and Edward. and great-grandson David. Sadly missed by his daughters-in-law Berny and Constance, son-in-law Tony Servis and his extended family and friends.

As Liam lay in his coffin over the last few days his hands have been joined together intertwined in a gesture of prayer. I was conscious that throughout his life those hands have been intertwined with so much of what he has achieved in his ninety five years. In partnership with his brain Liam could turn those hands to anything. I was reminded of a piece I came across a few years ago but unfortunately I'm not sure of its origin or the author.

"Our hands tell who we are. They are believed to be perfect subjects of the mind. As physical labour shows in the callouses on our palms, so does gentleness or strength. Nothing else expresses human behaviour in so many ways. With our hands, we work, play, love, threaten, show joy or grief. Sensitive symbols of faith and friendship, our hands draw to us everything and everyone we love. Marvellously made and directed by the mind's eye, the mind's ear, and the heart's desire, our hands continually express our lives. ....what words cannot say, the hands can express with all tenderness and love.

*'Our hands continually express our lives'* The story of how Liam Walsh's hands expressed his life began 95 years ago in Garryduff. From an early age Liam fell in love with the land and with farming. He particularly loved working with his grandfather who introduced him to the world of Pedigree Hereford Cattle. While the breed of cattle may have changed through the years that love and passion for animals, for the land for the seasons of nature remained all of his life.

*Sensitive symbols of faith and friendship, our hands draw to us everything and everyone we love.* Back in the early 1950's those hands, presumably in harmony with his feet, swept a young Kilkenny woman, Cathleen McGrath, off her feet as he led her around a dance floor in Borris In Ossory. As Lena will tell us later Liam was not the only one competing for a place in Cathleen's heart but as on many other subsequent occasions down through the years in a very different context Liam won the rosette. That fateful meeting was to lead to a partnership which lasted through more than sixty five years of marriage, successfully negotiated the world of various business enterprises, raised and educated four children, rejoiced in the arrival of twelve grandchildren and then a great grandchild.

Liam and Cathleen were married in Cathleen's home parish of Clogh Castlecomer in August 1955 and after their marriage they moved to England where they set up home in Kent. Liam continued his passion for those pedigree cattle and he worked on the farm attached to Lympne (Limb) Castle. Their four children were born in England. Eleven years later the family returned to Ireland and took over a grocery and fishmonger business which Liam's brother Cyril had set up some years earlier. As we acknowledged at Cathleen's funeral, out in Garyduff, in addition to the love of farming, there was in the Walsh DNA an entrepreneurial gene which produced a family of shopkeepers. Those hands which for many years had been more familiar with caring for cattle and planting crops now were somewhat re-purposed to serve the many customers who crossed the threshold of his thriving business in Kimmage Road west in Dublin. Liam and Cathleen's long term plan was to move back down the country. By the mid-seventies , a bit like that famous SHAWS slogan, The Walsh brothers too had become 'almost nationwide'.

Liam and Kathleen returned to Rathdowney in 1977 and for ten years they ran a very successful business on the square which incorporated a pub, a grocery and a gift ware shop. Those hands now developed a new skill of pulling pints and for a man who avoided alcohol all of his life this must have been an interesting new experience. Less than two years after returning to live in Rathdowney Liam and Kathleen suffered the worst grief any parent can endure when their son Seamus was tragically killed in a flying accident at the airfield in Birr. It is very difficult for anyone to recover from a blow like that and I'm sure , while sustained by a strength of character combined with an equally strong faith, they managed to pick

up the pieces of their lives again, the memory of that loss was never very far from their minds and hearts.

While continuing to run the business in the square Liam gravitated back towards his first love of farming. He rented some land so that he could develop his new interest of breeding pedigree Charolais cattle which had only come to Ireland from France back in the mid 1960's. This was to be a passion for Liam particularly after he and Cathleen retired from business in 1987. Meticulous in everything he did, those hands now spent a great deal of time preparing beautiful animals for presentation and competition at shows all over Ireland. I noticed that Liam was laid out wearing the tie from The Irish Charolais Cattle Society. His interest in this particular breed of cattle brought him into contact with many like minded people in Ireland, England and France where he travelled on many occasions. Liam's trips to France could perhaps be described as something of a Bull and Booze Cruise because he brought home both. Despite being a non drinker I gather he acquired a knowledge of good French wine and I suppose he knew there would be somebody to drink it when he got home.!

When they retired Liam and Cathleen moved out of town to the beautiful old Church of Ireland Rectory in Johnstown Glebe. By their own admission these were the happiest years of their lives. As the pace of their lives changed it gave them time to indulge in a few pastimes. The partnership of Hands and brain was again in play as they both became accomplished Bridge players. Living now in a beautiful period house also acted as an inspiration for Liam to indulge another skill and pastime he had developed back in Dublin, that of restoring antique furniture.. What a full and varied and interesting life has been lived by this man we honour with Christian burial today.

As I mentioned back in February, over the last five or six years I visited Liam and Cathleen at home every month to bring them Holy Communion. Normally we sat at the kitchen table and in some ways it was a scene reminiscent of the gospel I read today about the disciples at the supper in Emmaus. We sat at the table, we told stories, they would often relate something that was happening in your family lives, we prayed, we broke bread. Jesus was present. There was something very sacred about that simple ritual. It was also sacred because Liam and Cathleen brought to that encounter a life long journey of Faith which had been nurtured and nourished from their earliest days in Garryduff and in Clogh. It was a faith

which had sustained them in good times but most especially when the storms of life came their way. In the words of that first reading from the Book of Wisdom Liam and Cathleen have been put to the test and they have proved worthy to be with Him, he has tested them like gold in a furnace. When the time comes for his visitation (and for Liam that time has come today), he will shine out as sparks run through the stubble, so will he.

*Sensitive symbols of faith and friendship, our hands draw to us everything and everyone we love. As you who have loved Liam as a father, a grandfather a brother, a friend ,let go of his hands today, we know in faith that soon those same hands will once again be drawn to and intertwined with his beloved Cathleen and their son Seamus. He leaves on his final journey today with those powerful words of the second reading ringing in his ears.*

*Happy are those who die in the Lord. Happy indeed, the Spirit says; now they can rest for ever after their work, since their good deeds go with them.*

*I would like to leave with some words from an Indian poet, Tagore*

*It was beautiful as long as it lasted, the journey of my life, I have no regrets whatsoever, save the pain I'll leave behind.*

*Those dear hearts who love and care, and the heavy with sleep ever moist eyes, the smile in spite of a lump in the throat and the strings pulling at the heart and soul,*

*The strong arms that held me up when my own strength let me down, each morsel that I was fed with, was full of love.*

*At every turning of my life I came across good friends and family who stood by me, even when the time raced me by.*

*Farewell, farewell my friends, I smile and bid you goodbye.*

*No, shed no tears, for I need them not, all I need is your smile, If you feel sad, do think of me, for that's what I'll like, when you live in the hearts of those you love, remember then..... you never die*

Liam, may your hands and heart and soul now rest in Peace AMEN