

**Tess O'Toole RIP**  
**Funeral Mass**  
**Rathdowney Church**  
**Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2021**

Teresa (Tess) O'Toole (née Delaney), The Showgrounds, Rathdowney, Co. Laois. May 28th 2021, peacefully at Portlaoise Regional Hospital. Predeceased by her husband Matthew. Sadly mourned by her sons, Matthew, Simon and Justin, her brothers and sisters, nephews, nieces, relatives, neighbours and friends.

I can recall making a visit to a cemetery a few years ago and I came across a headstone with the following inscription that some of you might be familiar with.

*Dear Stranger,*

*Pause as you pass by,*

*As you are now, so once was I*

*As I am now, so once you shall be,*

*So prepare yourself to follow me!*

A pithy little piece and somewhat sobering. But it serves to remind us that our life here on earth is perhaps best described in terms of a journey which we all undertake, a journey which, for people of Faith, has heaven as its ultimate destination, a journey where God is our companion and guide. It is a journey which has twists and turns, hills and valleys, rough roads and smooth ones too.

Tess' life involved a few significant journey's some long some quite short. One of eleven Delaney's from the parish of Castletown Tess' first big journey was one taken by many Irish men and women in the post Second World war years of 1940's and 1950's Ireland. Tess went to

London to train as a nurse. I'm not sure how long she was in England when one evening in the company of her sister Phylis Tess made a very short but perhaps one of the most significant journeys of her life, that was the trip ye took to an Irish Dance Hall (was it Balham?) The trip was significant because that was the night she met the man she was going to marry, Matthew O'Toole from Dublin. Tess and Matthew were married in 1963. Some years later and now with a family of three young sons Tess and Matthew made a big decision to undertake a very long journey and relocate to Perth in Western Australia. Life in the land down under did not turn out to be exactly as they had hoped or expected. They returned to England and set up home in rural Northamptonshire. Tess returned to her nursing career focusing mainly on caring for older people. When Matthew and Tess retired in 2005 they embarked on one further journey and in a way it was the return leg of a journey which had begun for both of them more than forty years earlier. They chose to come and live in this community where Phylis was settled and where their mother was now living next door here in Cuan Bhríde.

Justin, when I asked you to give me some words which best described your mam, you gave me four, Independent, Private, somewhat Introverted and resilient. That resilience was particularly evident ten years ago when Tess was seriously ill and I believe close to death. The excellent medical care she received at St. James in Dublin combined with her faith and resilience meant that she regained her health. That resilience was to be evident again six years ago when Matthew, her husband of over fifty years passed away.

Tess was a member of the nursing profession for than 40 years. It takes a very special person to be a good nurse. Sometimes nurses are spoken about in a patronising way and I certainly don't wish to do that today but as a priest I go into to hospitals and other care settings regularly and I see the extraordinary service that nurses give. They meet people at their most vulnerable and their care for them is something they never

forget. I chose that gospel today because in some way I always think that nurses have a unique opportunity to make real the significant sentence in the passage “*Whatever you do to the least of these brothers and sisters of mine you do it to me*” I recently came across a piece which is simply called a Nurse’s prayer and in so many ways it is a retelling of today’s gospel. It is God’s address to a nurse:

*Be me in the world.  
Be my voice to the deaf.  
Be my faith where there is doubt.  
Be my hope where there is despair.  
Be my light where there is darkness.  
Be my joy where there is sadness.  
Be me in the world.*

*Be my eyes to the blind.  
Be my consolation to those who need to be consoled.  
Be my understanding to those who need to be understood.  
Be my healing to those who need to be healed.  
Be my love to those who need love.  
Be my forgiveness to those who need to be forgiven.  
Be my death to those who need me.  
Be me in the world.*

*- author unknown -*

Throughout the many years of her nursing career, how many times must Tess O’Toole have made that prayer a reality. We give thanks today for her life and her dedication. Eternal rest grant onto Tess O Lord and may perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in Peace Amen