

Paddy Dunne RIP
Funeral Mass
Rathdowney Church
Wednesday 9th June 2021

Paddy Dunne, Moore Street, Rathdowney, Co. Laois and formerly Bordwell, Clough. June 5th 2021, suddenly and peacefully at his home. Predeceased by his wife Mary (née Brophy). Sadly mourned by his daughters Marie and Emer, sister-in-law Elizabeth, nephews, nieces, cousins, neighbours and many great friends, especially Darragh and the Coffey family and Pat McKelvey.

As we gather to say farewell to Paddy today there is a variation on a story which comes to my mind which I think might be appropriate. A young lad was on his way to school. He was passing a woodcarver's workshop and he looked in and saw a huge trunk of a tree which the woodcarver was ready to begin work on. The young lad had to keep going and for months after that, the front doors of the workshop were closed as he passed by, even though he could hear the woodcarver at work inside. Then one day as he was passing, the front doors were open again, the boy looked in and to his utter amazement, where the huge tree trunk had been was the figure of a magnificent tiger. The young lad walked right up to the woodcarver, tugged at his coat and asked: "excuse me sir but how did you know there was tiger in there?"

As each of us begins our journey of life we are all given something like that block of wood out of which we are invited to carve and craft our life. God gives us certain resources and tools to work with. Each of us will create something uniquely different and with varying degrees of success. Along the way we are helped and assisted by various people who come into our lives. In some way they all have their influence on us and on the shape of the life which we craft and create.

The man that we honour with Christian burial on this June day took that block of wood which God gave to him, he used the tools and talents he

was given and with the help of others, particularly his late wife Mary and his daughters Marie and Emer, he went on to craft a very full and rewarding life which lasted for almost eighty five years.

Paddy Dunne was born in Bordwell in the parish of Aghaboe on the 8th of August 1936. Despite living most of his adult life here in Rathdowney, Paddy remained fiercely loyal to his native place and he made a weekly pilgrimage back to visit his neighbours. Family names like the Hylands, The Moores, The Coffeys, The Connors, The Bergins were all precious to Paddy. Paddy was an only child and his parents had died when he was quite young. He grew up in the shelter of his neighbours and he never forgot their kindness to him.

From an early age Paddy developed a love and a skill for working with his hands. He worked with local Clough Builder, Liam Corby and it was one of those building projects which was to change Paddy's life quite significantly. Corbys came into Rathdowney to build an extension for the Brophy family of Moore Street. Many of the Brophy siblings had emigrated to England but lucky for Paddy one Mary Brophy had remained at home. Paddy came to build an extension. Little did he know that this house would become his home for more than fifty years. Paddy and Mary travelled to England to be married as so many of her family already lived over there. Having settled back in Moore Street, Paddy got a job as the maintenance man at the newly opened Harp Textiles factory here in town. More than two decades later when he thought of retiring he was asked to help out as caretaker at St. Fergal's College. This work introduced Paddy to a whole new world of young people and he loved the contact he had with them. I know he is fondly remembered by the many students he interacted with over the years and particularly those he helped with their practical woodwork and engineering projects. Paddy's approach to helping young people was based on that wise old proverb:

Give a Man a Fish, and You Feed Him for a Day. Teach a Man To Fish, and You Feed Him for a Lifetime

Speaking of Fishing, it was Paddy's life long hobby and he derived hours of enjoyment from it.

Incidentally I was just thinking the other day that Paddy Dunne will have a major advantage over a lot of us as he meets Jesus, face to face. You know how when you meet someone for the first time and you wonder what you might talk about. Well it is a plus if you know something about the other person's interests or what work they do. Well there is Paddy who loved to work with wood and also a keen fisherman meeting up with Jesus who was raised in a carpenter's home and when it came to choosing his closest collaborators the first people he picked were all Fishermen. So I suspect they will get on well together.

Last night during the rosary I was looking at Paddy's big hands now intertwined with his rosary beads joined together in a gesture of prayer but also in a sense joined together in a gesture of completion after a long life well lived. Those hands which he had used so creatively in so many different ways, building things up, taking things apart, hands which he had used 'to give others a helping hand'. And when those hands were not building, making, taking apart, fishing they were sowing and planting in his garden.

Paddy Dunne has died in the late Spring and the early Summer of the year but also in the autumn of his life. Each season of the year has its own beauty. I suspect that having spent so much time close to the soil and to nature for most of his life Paddy was someone who was well aware of the seasons. Spring has its beauty, with its superabundance of life and growth. Well wrapped up in winter, we can appreciate the trees and bushes glittering with frost; the mantle of snow covering bare landscapes, the warmth, welcome and comfort of homes. Summer is a tranquil season. It is a time for holidays and festivals, slowing down of the tempo of days, long evenings and bright mornings. Autumn has its special beauty. A poet once described it in the following words:

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,

Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun.

It is a time of harvest and fruitfulness. The trees look spectacular in their autumn garb.

There is an autumn in life too. The good fight has been fought. Energies are declining but with it comes the shedding of responsibilities and much contentment. Many people shy off the very thought of it, but the poet had another angle. He could see the riches, the achievement, the colour, the contentment of autumn. That too is the experience of many people as they grow older; a sense of duty done, life lived, love given and received.

Autumn signals the end of an age of life. In the flaming forests, life is declining and winter is about to set in. Decline is not the whole story, however. Dead leaves are falling to the ground but they are not alone. The seeds of new life are also falling. Jesus thought of this when he spoke of the grain of wheat. It falls to the ground; it seems to die but in the act of dying and being received into the earth it gives birth to the green sprout, beautiful and bountiful. In the winds and storms of autumn the seeds are shaken from the branches. Sometimes they are caught by a gentle breeze, other times it is a violent storm that snatches them. In the end they fall to the welcoming earth which is ready to receive them and is life giving. Dying is part of living and a step along the road of on-going life. We are here today because Paddy is taking that final step on his life's journey. Early last Saturday morning, quietly and without fuss and in the autumn of his life, Paddy released his spirit to God; was received by his welcoming love and made ready for a new spring in God's life-filled presence forever.

Last Friday night as Paddy climbed the stairs of his home if he had known it was the last time he would do it would he have done anything differently? Probably not because in those words of St. Paul today he may well have said. The time of my departure has come, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race and I have kept the Faith.

Paddy, you have so now may your soul rest in peace Amen