

John Broderick RIP
Funeral Mass
Rathdowney Church
Saturday 28th August 2021

John Broderick, Knockiel, Rathdowney, Co. Laois and formerly Killimor, Co. Galway. August 26th 2021. Peacefully at home in the presence of his family. Predeceased by his brother Vincent. Deeply regretted by his wife Kathleen and his family Kevin, John, Angela and Mary, son-in-law David, daughter-in-law Margaret, grandchildren Alanna, Daniel, John, Conor and Grainne, his sister Rose and brother Marty, nephews, nieces, cousins, neighbours and friends.

One of the things I learned about John in recent days is that in between his work as a builder and a farmer, his love and commitment to his family he did have time for a few personal hobbies and interests. His roots in East Galway gave him a love of GAA and hurling in particular. Music and particularly that of the country and Irish variety gave him hours of pleasure even up through the final days of his illness. The other great pastime was cards and in particular the game of 25. For many years he was a regular participant in the famous game of nines which took place every week in Mooney's pub in Donaghmore. When he connected up with his Galway relatives at Christmastime the cards were also produced.

From my little experience of playing 25 and indeed any card game I know that there is no great difficulty in playing when you are dealt a really good hand. Equally so there is little difficulty in playing a really bad hand. The challenge comes when you are dealt a hand which is a mixture of good, bad and middle of the road cards. Such a hand requires a lot of skill and a bit of good luck as well. In truth most of our lives reflect that third hand of cards and the story of our life is the account of how we played the hand we were dealt.

Last Thursday evening, John Broderick's earthly life came to a close after just over 81 years. John's story, his hand of cards is in some sense laid out before us today as we gather here for his funeral mass.

John's story began on the 18th of July 1940 when he was born in the parish of Kilimor in County Galway. His early childhood was greatly influenced by the tragic death of his mother when he was only eighteen months old and his younger brother was just an infant. Thanks to the great support and care of his extended family of father, grandparents, aunts, uncles and wonderful neighbours John's early childhood was filled with love and security. When his dad remarried and with the arrival of new siblings John's experience of family became even more precious to him. That love and priority of all things family was to be a feature of John's life after he met and married you Kathleen and you welcomed your own four children into the world. But if I could revert to the playing cards analogy I suspect the trump cards in John's hand were to be his five grandchildren whom he delighted in.

Like many young people of John's generation the prospect of a better standard of living beckoned from across the Irish sea. In 1962 at the age of 22 John headed over to relatives in the London area. He soon found work in the building trade which was thriving in the decades after the Second World War. Shortly after his arrival he was to meet you Kathleen. It was in Tollington Park. I'm not sure if the Church was on the upper floor and the dancehall underneath or was it the other way around? I'm not sure either was it at Mass or at the dance that He first set eyes on you. You were married in 1965 and moved to live in Barking in Essex where your two sons, John and Kevin were born. Like so many Irish people the plan was always to come home to live in Ireland. In 1973 you did come home and you were to settle here in Rathdowney. Your daughters Angela and Mary were born here. Being back home in Ireland allowed John to combine his job as a builder with a return to his love of farming. Having land in both Laois and Galway must have been a bit of a logistical challenge but I think John was always happy to return to his Killimor roots. His work as builder brought John the length and breath

of the country but he certainly left his mark on this town when he developed the homes on Knockiel Drive. In the process he employed and mentored many young people in this community and some of them went on to be accomplished builders on their own.

When 22 year old John Broderick left Killimor in 1962 to travel to England he may not have had much luggage or material things to bring with him as he set out on an adventure which was to change the course of his life in so many ways. But what he did bring with him was some of things represented by the symbols up here before the altar. He brought with him a deep appreciation and love of family, he brought a love of the place and the county he had been raised in. He also brought a work ethic which allowed him to achieve his dreams. Finally he brought with him a very strong Catholic Christian faith which had been nourished and strengthened in his family and in his community in Killimor. All of those qualities and values were retained and developed throughout John's life and I believe they are qualities he and Kathleen sought to pass on to their family.

So this is the story we celebrate today, the hand of cards which by any measurement John Broderick has played with considerable skill. The gospel you as a family have chosen for your dad's funeral is so apt. As a man who in his lifetime built and created many a room and many a home for other people, today he goes to The Father's House to a room which has been prepared for Him. In a very real sense He has sent the building materials up ahead of him by the way he has lived his life.

Finally , I want to leave you with an image which over the years I have found to be comforting for many families as they say farewell to loved ones and which I hope you as a family can take some comfort today. John made many journeys in his lifetime and he loved to travel. There were all those journeys between Ireland and England over the years but later with you Angela he was able to spread his wings and discover different parts of the world particularly the USA. Today John leaves on his final journey and this church, is something of a departure lounge where we have gathered to pray with him as he takes his leave of us.

So, I would like you to picture yourselves standing on a dock beside one of those great old-time sailing vessels. It's standing there, sails folded, waiting for the wind. Suddenly a breeze comes up. When the captain senses the breeze as a forerunner of the necessary wind, he quickly orders the sails to be let down and sure enough the wind comes, catches the sails full force, and carries the ship away from the dock where you are standing. Inevitably you or someone on that dock is bound to say, "Well there she goes"! And from our point of view it indeed does go. Soon the mighty ship, laden with it's crew and goods, is on the horizon, where the water and the sky meet and it looks like a speck before it disappears. It's still mighty and grand, still filled with life and goods, but it has left us. We are standing on the dock, quite alone. But, on the other side of the ocean, people are standing in anticipation, and as that speck on the horizon becomes larger, they begin to shout something different. They are crying with joy, not abandonment, "Here she comes!". And at the landing, there is welcome, joy, embracing and celebration.

You miss your husband, father and grandfather. He is quickly receding from your sight. This funeral Mass and his burial later in Shanahoe are our farewells, our version of "there she goes". But goes where? From our sight, from our community, from our care and love and friendship. How he will be missed. But he is not diminished, nor made poorer. We must remember in faith that "Here he comes" is the cry on the eternal shore where Jesus, who understands the human heart is waiting. And there is John, now forever larger than life, filled with life and laughter and in the arms of the One who makes all things new again, the One who says, "Welcome John. Welcome Home"