

Martin Delaney RIP
Funeral Mass
Rathdowney Church
Thursday 30th June 2022

*Martin Delaney, Clonburren, Rathdowney, Co. Laois, June 28th, 2022.
Peacefully, at Portlaoise Regional Hospital. Predeceased by his parents Joseph and Sarah and his sister Sr. Sheila (St. Leo's, Carlow). Sadly mourned by his wife Joan and his family Diarmaid, Sorcha and Orlaith, daughter-in-law Veronica and baby Sarah, sons-in-law Murray and Alex, sister-in-law, brothers-in-law, relatives, neighbours and friends.*

The experts who have done research in this area strongly contend that the happiest time of our human lives is the nine months we spend in our mother's womb. All our needs are taken care of on demand. Our first experience of death comes when we are expelled at birth from the safety and comfort of our mother's womb out into this great world of the unknown. While everyone waits with joy and expectation for the birth of this new child, for the child themselves this is an experience of death and uncertainty. At the end of our earthly life the circumstances are not dissimilar. Just as we cling on to the familiar world of the womb at our birth there are few who would not prefer to cling on to the familiar world of family and friends rather than go out into the unknown that comes with death. And yet, we know that birth, as painful as it was for us brought us out into a world of many possibilities, for growth, for love, for happiness. Because of our Christian faith we also believe that death, as painful as it is, is a liberation into a whole new and eternal life in the presence of God.

I refer to this mystery of Birth and Death today because in these past few weeks the Delaney Family of Clonburren have lived this mystery in a very real way. As Martin's earthly life was ebbing away baby Sarah his first grandchild was arriving into this world. One lovely blessing is that Martin was able to meet Sarah just after she was born. This mass today

celebrates endings and new beginnings. We are sad that Martin's life has come to end after just over seventy-eight years. In faith we believe that for Martin this is also a time of new birth, new beginnings in heaven with God. But despite our faith we also at a very human level feel sadness. For Joan and Diarmuid, Sorcha and Orlaith Martin's death is a huge loss and leaves a huge gap in your lives. As I said at the beginning this funeral mass allows to commend Martin's soul to the mercy and love of God and it also allows us an opportunity to support and comfort you, his family. The funeral Mass also allows us to celebrate Martin's life. It is a life which has been lived completely here in this parish community and in the neighbourhood of Clonburren. The man we honour with Christian burial today was born on Sunday the 9th of January 1944. Like many in his neighbourhood Martin went to school in Graigue National School in the Parish of Galmoy. Leaving school at 13 Martin was destined to be a dairy farmer and this was a way of life which was far more than a job for him. He worked hard but it was also a labour of love, he loved the land, he loved the animals, he loved being in touch with nature. Like so many of his neighbours Martin also felt very much at home in the bog and indeed his last conversation with Joan and Diarmuid included an enquiry as to whether the turf had been cut yet. Reading down through the condolence messages on RIP.ie I was struck by the many references to Martin being a kind and helpful neighbour. Martin and Joan's neighbours are very important to them and that sense of Meitheal and 'Living in the Shelter of each other' was and is very real out around Clonburren and the surrounding townlands. We thank God for that spirit of support today and for Martin who both gave and received that support during his lifetime. Closely linked to that care for each other is the gift of Faith, a faith which for Martin was summarised in those two commandments Jesus spoke about in the gospel. Love of God and Love of neighbour.

Like all of us there were days in Martin's life which stood out more than others. For Martin one of the best and most memorable days of his life was St. Patrick's Day 1972, exactly fifty years ago. Perhaps in the

company of some his neighbours and friends but on that night, Martin strayed across the border into County Tipperary to a dance at the famous Premier Hall in Thurles. It was there on that night that he was to meet you Joan and the rest as they say is history. You were married on the first day of August 1974 and you settled in Clonburren.

My own personal memory of my namesake, Martin Delaney is of a gentleman with a great sense of humour, a man of deep religious faith and a man who loved this parish. Martin made a unique contribution to this parish in his many years as part of the cemetery committee. Around this time of year as we begin to celebrate the annual cemetery masses Martin would contact me to remind me about the other 'closed cemeteries' in the parish and on some date early in July he would come with me to Coolkerry, Clonebe, to Ballybuggy, to Donaghmore and the Shrine where we would bless the graves and remember those buried in those sacred places many who have nobody left to pray for them. I mentioned the significance of St. Patrick's Day for Martin but I also think today of that beautiful prayer attributed to St. Patrick which I think in many ways could also have been Martin Delaney's mantra: *I arise today Through God's strength to pilot me, God's eye to look before me, God's wisdom to guide me, God's way to lie before me, God's shield to protect me*

.....Christ be with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise, Christ to shield me, Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me
I arise today

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. I think it may be fair to say that Martin was very much a home bird and was happy never to travel too far. However, no doubt encouraged by you Joan, Martin did make a few very interesting journeys in his life

most notably your honeymoon in Bulgaria and two very memorable trips out to visit you Sorcha in Australia, once to Perth in 2008 and then to Melbourne in 2014. While on that trip to Perth Martin was intrigued to find a little memorial to the hundreds of thousands of Irish people who had sailed for weeks to find a new life in Australia particularly as a result of the great Famine.

Today we are gathered here in Rathdowney as Martin begins his final journey. This church, is today something of a departure lounge where we have gathered to pray with Martin as he takes his leave of us. 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 its 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.

We miss Martin. He is quickly receding from our sight. This funeral Mass and his burial later in Errill 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 she comes" is the cry on the eternal shore where Jesus, who understands the human heart is waiting. And there is Martin, 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 Martin. Welcome Home"