

Raymond (Ray) Fitzpatrick RIP
Funeral Mass
Rathdowney Church
Thursday 14th July 2022

Raymond Joseph (Ray) Fitzpatrick, Slieve Bloom View, Borris-In-Ossory, Co. Laois, July 6th 2022. Sadly missed by his partner and soulmate Mary, his son Billy, daughter Kelly, Jason, Andrea, Jamie and Darren, his beloved grandchildren and great-grandchildren, his brother Seamus, sisters Margaret and Jeanette and his dear aunty Pat, nephews, nieces, the McCaine and Kavanagh families, also Annette and Gerry his neighbours and a wide circle of friends including his work colleagues at Brand Central, Midland Service Station and Rathdowney GAA grounds team.

Readings: **Danielle**

Prayers **Annette**

Symbols: Oscar wilde Book

Tottenham Hotspus

Family Picture

Music

Antiques

I'd like to begin these few words today by sharing a poem which some of you might be familiar with. It is simply called the dash.

The Dash

by Linda Ellis

I read of a man who stood to speak
at the funeral of a friend.

He referred to the dates on the leaflet
from the beginning...to the end.

He noted that first came the date of birth

and spoke of the following date with tears,
but he said what mattered most of all
was the dash between those years.

For that dash represents all the time
that they spent alive on earth.
And now only those who loved them
know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own,
the cars...the house...the cash.
What matters is how we live and love
and how we spend our dash.

So, think about this long and hard.
Are there things you'd like to change?
For you never know how much time is left
that can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough
to consider what's true and real
and always try to understand
the way other people feel.

And be less quick to anger
and show appreciation more
and love the people in our lives
like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect
and more often wear a smile,
remembering that this special dash

might only last a little while.

So, when your eulogy is being read,
with your life's actions to rehash...
would you be proud of the things they say
about how you spent YOUR dash?

The two dates which may in time appear on Raymond's tombstone are the 4th of July 1953 and the 6th of July 2022. In between those two dates is a little dash which for Raymond represents just 69 years and two days of life.

*"What matters is how we live and love
and how we spend our dash."*

Well, how did Ray Fitzpatrick spend his dash? Many of you who knew him for many years could answer that question very well. In recent days I have gained some little insight into the man who we commend to the love and mercy of God today and whose life we celebrate in this funeral mass.

Raymond was one of seven siblings born to Kit and Bill Fitzpatrick both of whom had moved from their native Nenagh in Co. Tipperary to make a better life for themselves in London. But life in postwar London also had many challenges. At the age of only seven Raymond showed an early entrepreneurial flair by using a homemade cart with wheels to transport laundry for the mothers in the neighborhood earning a penny for each load. Later he exchanged carrying laundry for carrying coal. The money he earned was banked with his mother so that she could mind it for him. When he was a young teenager, Raymond's family moved from North London to Peckham in southeast London. Despite the move from North London Ray remained a lifelong Tottenham Hotspurs fan. When Ray left

formal school at just 16 his life certainly picked up pace. Having met the woman who would be his first wife when he was just 17 by the time, he was in his early twenties he was married to Frances and the father of two children, Kelly, and Billy. Even though his early attempts to become a butcher did not last too long, Raymond always worked hard to provide for his family. An important aspect of Raymond's life was his contact with his extended family of parents, siblings and nieces and nephews and there were I gather many memorable gatherings where he was the life and soul of the party. Unfortunately, Ray's first marriage broke down, but he was later to find love again when he met Mary McCain from Rathdowney. They set up home in Southeast London and it was at this time that Raymond began a very interesting work period of his life when he headed up the main cleaning contract team in the Houses of parliament in Westminster. Perhaps it is rather interesting that as Raymond was dying last week another major clean up or clean out was happening in Westminster! And I'm not just talking about Boris. It also seems that a major leak did appear in the House of Commons necessitating the cleaning company being called in. Ray and Mary moved here to Rathdowney in 2004. He exchanged the hallowed corridors of Westminster for Santa's Grotto in Brand Central. Raymond relished the role of the generous man in the red suit who brought delight and smiles to the faces of children in this community for more than ten years. I wondered if it reminded him of his favorite Oscar Wilde story, The Happy Prince whose mission it was to bring happiness and help to those in need. I was struck by the number of people, paying tribute to Raymond on RIP.ie spoke of him as a gentleman a man with a gentle smile. That gentleness also expressed itself in his love for

animals and Mary, I think you told me that your home in Borris was once a refuge for seven cats and three dogs, mostly waifs and strays welcomed by Ray.

Going back to that poem at the beginning.....

*For it matters not, how much we own,
the cars...the house...the cash.*

*What matters is how we live and love
and how we spend our dash*

Those of you here today and joining in on the webcam know that Raymond or Ray lived and loved well and that he spent his dash very much thinking about others in his life. His final illness was a difficult struggle for him. He loved his life, he loved his family and would have liked many more years with you Mary and to celebrate the lives of his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. His sense of humor I know helped him through these difficult months. I hope too that he may have drawn some comfort from the faith he was born into, a faith which in many ways is best summed up by the scripture readings we heard at his funeral today. *"Fear not, I am with you: be not dismayed; I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you, and uphold you with my right hand... For I am the Lord your God who grasps your right hand; it is I who says to you 'fear not I will help you' "*.....

That faith is also beautifully captured in the lovely poem, Ray's daughter will read for us at the end of Mass today. It is simply called: Don't cry for me and the words of that poem could easily be Raymond's parting words as he leaves us today.... The final verse of the poem says....

Don't cry for me.
This is not the end.
I'll be waiting here for you
when we meet again.

And So, Raymond, until we meet again.... May your gentle soul rest in peace.

Don't cry for me.
I will be okay.
Heaven is my home now,
and this is where I'll stay.

Don't cry for me.
I'm where I belong.
I want you to be happy
and try to stay strong.

Don't cry for me.
It was just my time,
but I will see you someday
on the other side.

Don't cry for me.
I am not alone.
The angels are with me
to welcome me home.

Don't cry for me,
for I have no fear.
All my pain is gone,
and Jesus took my tears.

Don't cry for me.
This is not the end.
I'll be waiting here for you
when we meet again.