

**Theresa Nolan RIP**  
**Funeral Mass**  
**Rathdowney church**  
**Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2022**

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Theresa Nolan, Cuan Bhríde, Rathdowney, Co. Laois. August 18th 2022.

In her 94th year and in the wonderful care of the nurses and staff of Ardeen Nursing Home, Thurles. Sadly mourned by her nephews and nieces, grandnephews, grandnieces, great-grandnephews, great-grandnieces, neighbours, relatives and friends.

### **Homily**

Yesterday as you might have seen on TV, thousands of people from all over Ireland gathered in summer sunshine in County Cork to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Michael Collins. It is just one of many events we have had and will have to mark to establishment of the Irish Free state, and freedom from British rule. The relationship we have with our nearest neighbour is rather complex and sometimes confusing and contradictory. At a very simplistic level we love to dislike everything about Britain. We follow English football teams, fly over for matches in the various sacred stadia like Old Trafford, Anfield or Stamford Bridge. However, when those players that we revere and look up to take off their club jerseys and put on an English Jersey we are likely to shout loudly for whoever they happen to be playing against. We all know something of the role Britain played in our country's history and for the most part we don't particularly like it. But there is also another aspect to that relationship. Britain was for many decades the place most young Irish people chose to go to, in order to make a better life for themselves. This was particularly true in the forties, fifties and sixties. Without a doubt, Irish people made an enormous contribution to life in their new country, but they were also able to benefit from a quality of life that just was not available to them here at home in Ireland. We have to acknowledge that the Ireland of the forties, fifties and early sixties, was not always an easy place to live and I don't simply mean from an

economic point of view. It could also be an unkind, harsh and even oppressive society and the opportunity to escape was a welcome relief. I imagine that was a significant part of the reason Theresa Nolan left this town in 1959 and set sail for England in the company of her friend, Anne Kelly.

Theresa was thirty years old when she went to England. She first went to stay with her sister Kitty who helped her to find a job and put down new roots in her adopted home. Theresa was to spend 46 years living in England and for thirty of those she worked in Kingston Hospital. I think it is fair to say that Theresa is one of many Irish people who loved living in England and who would always acknowledge that England was good to her. She did of course keep in touch with her family here at home and she corresponded regularly with some friends from her childhood days here in Rathdowney. In many ways the Ireland's Own presented as one of the symbols at the begging of Mass reflected Theresa's love of Ireland and her desire to keep in touch with her native land. The photo albums are another symbol of her connection to her extended family.

I don't know if it had always been Theresa's intention that she would spend the final years of her life back here in Ireland but when one of her good friends, Peter with whom she had worked in Kingston Hospital died and then when her sister Kitty relocated to be nearer her family in Skegness in Lincolnshire, Theresa began to seriously consider returning to Ireland. It was not an easy decision for her, and I can recall when Mary and John approached me back in 2015, I think it was to see if Theresa could live in Cuan Bhríde. It took some time and few changes of heart before Theresa finally decided to come home. Transitions are difficult for all of us. They are difficult because even when we choose them ourselves, they involve leaving a place and a circle of friends we have been familiar with and move to another space which is filled with uncertainty. Even though there may be familiar people there, there is also a way of life which is different and in Theresa's case a country that had changed dramatically in the decades she had been away. Theresa spent five years here in Cuan Bhríde. Having the support of you John

and Mary was enormously helpful and I know she loved the visits from, and opportunities to stay with, her other family members here in Ireland. I'm sure there were moments when Theresa may have wondered was she right to leave Kingston to come back here but I also know there were very happy times here too. Her friendship with one of her neighbours in Cuan Bhride, Patricia Sheeran was particularly significant for Theresa. I think they spent part of every day with each other. They would cook for each other and helped each other in many ways. Every Sunday morning, I would see Patricia call for Teresa to walk with her here to Mass. We would exchange a few words and they would move on. Patricia's relatively sudden death in 2019 was a terrible blow to Theresa and I think may have contributed to a renewed sense of restlessness. Theresa left Cuan Bhride last summer and moved to Ardeen Nursing Home outside Thurles. Another transition and one which involved Theresa losing some of her independence which she valued very much.

Through all those transitions in Theresa's life she has had to have some quality of resilience and that strength spoken of in the first reading from the Book of Proverbs. But in addition to resilience and strength there was also faith and trust in her God. The make-up bag and the perfume remind us that Theresa always liked to look her best when she went out, even down the street to do her shopping. But I think she also knew the truth of those last lines in the Proverbs reading:

*Charm is superficial and beauty fades; but the woman who honours the Lord is to be praised.*

Theresa made the final transition in her earthly life when she passed away last Thursday. I pray that whatever fears or reservations she may have had about leaving this world will soon be wiped away when she settles into her new home, that room in the Father's house in heaven.

Putting it another way, in the words of that beautiful little poem by Minnie Louise Haskins:

*I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year, "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown". And he replied "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than a light, and safer than a known way."*

Theresa, May your gentle soul rest in Peace