

Agnes Moore RIP
Funeral Mass
Saturday 27th August 2022

The first two weeks of September 1939 were very significant and very painful in Irish and world History. Adolf Hitler invaded Poland leading to Britain and France declaring war on Germany which escalated into becoming the Second world war. The Irish government declared a state of emergency, Eamon De Valera announced that Ireland would remain neutral in the war. The first casualty of the war was the blowing up of a British ship by the Germans of the west coast of Ireland. The survivors of that ship were helped by among others, a young American soldier called John F Kennedy and then he flew across the Atlantic for the first time from Foynes in County Limerick to New York. The Irish minister for supplies, one Sean Lemass introduced petrol rationing because of the War. One piece of good news was that on the 16th of September 1939 a baby girl was born in the Conoboro Rathdowney to Francis Brady and Mary Fanning, and they named her Agnes.

I could not help but feel that the circumstances of Agnes' arrival into the world were not that dissimilar to her departure. Again, there is a terrible war in Europe and because of it there is the makings of an energy crisis and maybe even the rationing of fuel.

It is somewhat ironic but the need for Britain to rebuild itself in those post war years of the late forties and fifties provided many young Irish people with opportunities to build a quality of life which was just not available to them here at home in Ireland in those years. Agnes Brady was one of those young people who along with the man she was destined to marry, Tony Moore from Clough went to England to begin a new life. Tony and Agnes came back here to be married in this church in Rathdowney on the 7th of September 1960. Agnes and Tony settled in Greenford, Middlesex in England and by all accounts they had a very happy life there.

One of the places that Agnes and Tony grew to love was Scotland and they went on holiday there every year. I think the Irish and the Scottish

always feel a kindred spirit with each other. Her love of Scotland was symbolised by her continued subscription to The People's Friend magazine which she loved and read from cover to cover. Tony and Agnes also of course regularly returned to visit their family here in Rathdowney and out in Clough. Like so many Irish people who emigrated to Britain, they hoped to return to Ireland to live when they retired. Sadly, they had just begun the process of looking for a home here in County Laois when Tony died in January 1995. Tony's death was a huge blow for Agnes. She remained living and working in England for a further six years and in 2001 she finally returned to live in Rathdowney in Mooreville. Agnes' first ten years back home were full of life and activity. In the words of that first reading from the Book of Ecclesiastes there was a time and a season for so many activities under heaven. A daily mass goer she got involved with the choir, the active retirement group, ICA The Mothers Union and so many other community activities. Agnes, I believe always had a great grá and love for this her native town. Beyond Rathdowney Agnes loved to go exploring on her beloved bicycle taking herself off up to the Slieve Blooms so that she could be in the midst of nature. Laurie, as I listened to you and your daughters talk of Agnes love of being out in nature on her bike I was reminded of a somewhat light-hearted prayer or blessing for cyclists I came across some years ago. Maybe Agnes could have prayed it herself:

As we bike through the city streets, the highways and the mountain trails

Protect us LORD from spills and crashes

Trucks and cars whose drivers do not recognize our right to use the roads

Dogs who like to bite our shapely legs

Potholes, cracks, and sharp objects that flatten our tires,

Thieves, and bike nappers who lust after our bikes

The rains and thunders

And all kinds of nasty accidents

*Give us energy and the strength
To wake up in the morning and go for a bike ride
To ride up hills and mountains
To reach our destination.
Grant us the courage
To descend rapidly down the hills
To ride through the rain
To join and finish races even if we know we'll never win
May we experience the joy and ecstasy
As we are moved by the beauty of nature
As the sun and the wind caress our face
As we feel one with the bike and the road
And forget about the time
As we get in touch with the child within us
As we enjoy each other's company
As we feel we could bike forever
May we continue biking even as we grow old
And up to the day we die
And may you allow us to continue biking in heaven
Forever and ever
Amen!"*

For whatever reason, just as the first ten years of Agnes life back home in Ireland, were full of life and activity and involvement, the last ten years have been ones of quiet seclusion. In a sense Agnes withdrew from the world. In many ways Laurie you were her bridge to that outside world. You visited her regularly and daily if needed and you spoke to her last thing at night. You allowed her to feel safe in the space she had chosen for herself. You were an incredible sister to Agnes, and we give thanks for your dedication today.

Two years ago when it was no longer possible for Agnes to continue to live on her own, she moved to the nursing Home in Shinrone where she died on Thursday last.

As I was writing these reflections yesterday, I noticed that the leaves on the tree outside my window were already beginning to turn that golden colour of Autumn. Some of the leaves have even begun to fall to the ground. I thought of the wildflowers being presented today symbolic of Agnes' love of nature. The closer we are to nature the more our faith begins to make sense. At the heart of today's gospel, we see the mystery of nature, the mystery of death and resurrection. The seed must fall to the ground and die before the new life can emerge. Agnes has died as the summer comes to a close and Autumn begins. Agnes has also died in the Autumn of her own life. The signs of death are all around us but they also bring the promise of resurrection. The poet, Edward Hays in his Autumn Psalm of Fearlessness reflects on all this very beautifully when he says:

*I hear no fearful cries from creation,
No screams of terror,
As death daily devours
Once-green and growing life.
Peaceful and calm is Autumn's swan song
For she understands
That hidden in winter's death grip
Is spring's openhanded
Full-brimmed breath of life*

The other day I heard a song on the radio which I have not heard for some time. **The White Rose of Athens.**

One of the verses contains the lyrics which also reflect the Edward Hays Poem and indeed the gospel:

*The summer days are ending in the valley
And soon the time will come when we must be apart
But like the rose that comes back with the springtime
You will return to me when spring time comes around*

For Agnes, the summer days are ending. We are gathered here in this church where Agnes and Tony stood on their wedding day and where she participated in Mass so many times, to accompany her on her final journey as she goes to be reunited with her beloved Tony, her parents and the other members of her family who have gone before her. May her gentle soul now rest in peace AMEN