

Ann Bowe RIP
Funeral Mass
Rathdowney Church
Thursday 8th December 2022

Symbols: Sewing and knitting, Picture of Family, Rosary beads, Farmers journal, Accordion

Pat and Ann., son-in-law Eoin, daughter-in-law Iveta, grandchildren Jacob, Oscar and Chloe, Sisters: Mary Prunty (Longford) Nora Byrne (RIP)

Brothers: Bill (RIP) Dan in Portlaoise and Fintan in Gorey
Sister-in-law **Chrissie**

Readers: Ann Duggan and Eamonn Bowe. Prayers: Eoin, Pat, Pamela

A little over three years ago the former US First Lady and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton together with her daughter Chelsea co-wrote a very interesting book called *The Book of Gutsy Women*. It is a collection of 100 essays about very strong formidable women who have made quite a contribution in their own communities and beyond. Some of them are well known, many are not. What they all share in common is a can do kind of approach to life often in the face of personal or community adversity.

As I drove in from Graigue on Tuesday evening having had an opportunity to listen to you Pat and Ann talk about your mam the title and the theme of that book kept coming back to me because I could not help but feel that Ann Bowe and her life story might well have made it in to the pages of a book with a title like that. Ann's life was punctuated by significant challenges and each of those challenges had strengthened her character and shaped her outlook on life. Having listened to both of you describe your mam I suggested that you look at that first reading from the Book of Proverbs and I think as you both listened to the words you could hear a very strong echo of your mother's life and character in those lines

*Who shall find a valiant woman, who shall find a woman of strength.....She invites good not evil every day of her life. She does not neglect her tasks; she willingly works with her hands.....*You spoke of Ann's love and skill as a seamstress and dressmaker, those hands that created so many beautiful items of clothing for herself and others over the years

She works diligently, taking pride in her inner resources and strengths. I suppose it is true that none of us know what inner resources and strengths we have until some great challenge or crisis comes into our lives.....Ann and her husband Paddy Bowe were married in Raheen church in June 1978. On that summer's day, they made solemn promises to each other, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health till death do us part. No couple on their wedding day knows what those fateful words will demand of them but their full impact became a reality for Ann much sooner than she could have imagined. Just seven years after their marriage Paddy developed cancer and died in his early fifties leaving Ann with their two young children and a farm to run. With the help of friends and extended family, especially her brother-in-law Johnny, Ann was able to keep the farm going. But the task of being both mother and father to her two young children was something only she could do and she did. And despite those life altering challenges which Ann faced after Paddy died, I was struck by the fact that Pat and Ann's abiding memory of their mam was someone who was always Calm and kind and thoughtful. Again there was that echo from the Book of proverbs.....'*She speaks with wisdom and teaches in a kindly way....*

We are gathered here for Ann's funeral on the 8th of December the Feast of Mary the mother of Jesus. Sometimes Mary is presented to us as this serene almost other worldly figure who has little in common with the lived experience of most of our lives and particularly the lives of women But that impression is really way of the mark, Yes indeed she was and is serene and kind and calm and thoughtful but she is also a woman who knew the tough challenges of life. The circumstances surrounding the birth of her son were hardly ideal and she experienced the pain of loss of that same son at a very young age. One of the symbols Ann's family presented at the beginning of Mass today was a rosary beads to reflect their mam's faith. As I look at those beads I think of the times when Ann

prayed the rosary, the intentions she would have had, the worries and concerns for her family, for herself. And when she prayed that prayer to Mary, she was bringing her concerns to a woman who knew what it was to be a wife and a mother who had experienced pain and loss and still continued to be faithful, she continued to say Yes to her God and to her vocation in life. Mary's mother was Ann, a name very important in this family. The woman we honour with Christian burial today was given her mother's name and she in turn gave it to her daughter. The root meaning of the name Ann is '*God has favoured me*' I hope, and I pray that Ann Bowe nee Duggan felt that despite the unique challenges of her life, that God had favoured her and blessed her. He blessed her in her family, both the family she was born into and the family she and Paddy created together, In more recent times she has felt further blessed with the arrival of her three grandchildren, Jacob, Oscar and Chloe.

Today we are here to commend the soul of this valiant woman to the love and mercy of God. We commend her also to the care of Mary the mother of Jesus and her mother St. Ann.

Pat and Ann, Iveta and Eoin, Jacob, Oscar and Chloe, Mary, Dan and Fintan, and Ann's extended family and friends; our sympathies go out to you. I am very conscious that in these December days we are surrounded by a plethora of lights anticipating the joy of Christmas and for you as a family, a very powerful and a very beautiful light has been extinguished in your lives. But even though Ann is physically gone from you she will be an abiding presence and influence in your lives forever. A few years ago, I attended the funeral of the mother of one of my priest friends. Towards the end of his homily the priest used some words which I have never forgotten and I offer them to you as a family today:

we bury her body, but not her spirit.

we bury her hands, but not her good deeds;

we bury her heart, but not her love;

we bury her head, but not her memories. Ann, May you rest in Peace

