

Jack Dunphy RIP
Funeral Mass
Cullohill Church
Wednesday 16th November 2022

John (Jack) Dunphy, Oldtown, Cullohill, Portlaoise, Co. Laois. At his home in the presence of his loving family. Predeceased by his beloved Ann and son-in-law Paul. Deeply regretted by his devoted family; daughters Breda, Kathleen and Agnes, sons Larry and Sean also daughters-in-law Ann and Maggie, sons-in-law Michael and Andrew, grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren, sisters-in-law, brothers-in-law, nieces, nephews, cousins, relatives, neighbours and a wide circle of friends. Watching on livestream: **Siobhain and Paul (and partner Claire) in Newcastle, Australia, Mick in USA, Pauline in Perth, Lynda in London**

Symbols: Measuring Tape and Spirit level, **(Jack)** Family Photograph, **(Ann Marie)** Card shuffler, **(Rachel)** Rosary Beads, **(Mary)**

Readers: Ciara and Catherine

Prayer: Ben, Luke, Jack, Patrick, Janelle, Aishling

Bread and Wine: Ann and Agnes

Speak to grandchildren directly at the end. The best tribute to your grandad is to incorporate into your own lives what was best in his.

As we gather here today to celebrate the life of a man who was uniquely gifted with his hands, I'm reminded again of the story about a young lad who was on his way to school. He was passing a woodcarver's workshop and he looked in and saw a huge trunk of a tree which the woodcarver was ready to begin work on. The young lad had to keep going and for months after that, the front doors of the workshop were closed as he passed by, even though he could hear the woodcarver at work inside. Then one day as he was passing, the front doors were open again, the boy looked in and to his utter amazement, where the huge tree trunk had been was the figure of a magnificent tiger. The young lad

walked right up to the woodcarver, tugged at his coat and asked:
“excuse me sir but how did you know there was tiger in there?”

As each of us begins our journey of life we are all given something like that block of wood out of which we are invited to carve and craft our life. God gives us certain resources and tools to work with. Each of us will create something uniquely different and with varying degrees of success. Along the way we are helped and assisted by various people who come into our lives. In some way they all have their influence on us and on the shape of the life which we craft and create.

The man that we honour with Christian burial today took that block of wood which God gave him, he used the tools and talents which he was blessed with and went on to craft a very full and rewarding life. As we reflect today on that very full and rewarding life the first reading from the Book of Ecclesiastes offers us some inspiration.....The time to be born was for Jack Dunphy the 5th of July 1931 in the Mill in Oldtown, the youngest of nine children. He attended Primary school here in Cullohill. In the last few days, as I travelled up and down that road between Rathdowney and Cullohill a few times, it struck me that while Jack Dunphy was a proud Oldtown and a proud Cullohill man living here all of his 91 years, some of the short journeys he made up the road to Rathdowney had a very significant impact on his life. Firstly, after Primary school he headed to Rathdowney where he spent a few years at the recently opened Vocational School. That no doubt helped develop his skills in woodwork and other aspects of the building trade. It was also in Rathdowney that Jack had his first apprenticeship with the Stenson building firm and one of his early projects was to work on the roof of the new church being built in Rathdowney in the early 1950's. But perhaps Jack's most significant and life changing trip to Rathdowney was one night in the late 1950's when he went to a Dance in conjunction with the Ossory show. It was at that dance that he was to meet the love of his life, Ann Corby from Clough. The rest as they say is history. Ann and Jack were married in Clough church in 1959. Ironically, one of Jack's last outings a few weeks ago was to attend a family

wedding in Clough. No doubt it brought back memories to him of the day, sixty-three years earlier when he and Ann had made their vows to each other before that same altar.

Ann and Jack made their home in Oldtown. While Jack was busy developing his successful house building business Ann was at home running their small farm and raising their five children. In 1978, together with his brother-in-law, Liam Corby and his nephew, Billy McEvoy, Jack formed Oldtown Construction which focused mainly on providing high quality farm buildings. *A time for knocking down, a time for building.* When Jack retired from that company in the late 1990's he returned to his first love and his first skill, that of carpentry and the creation of many beautiful things in wood. The imprint of his craft and skill is found in many different places including in this church. Those of you who visited Jack's wake in Oldtown yesterday and signed your names in the book of condolence may or may not have known that the beautiful stand the book was on was one made by Jack himself. All of you here who knew Jack well will have your own stories and your own memories of this man we honour with Christian burial today. Over the last few days, I have heard a number of those memories. I was struck by the many times the phrase 'a true gentleman' was repeated in the numerous condolence messages on RIP.ie. I have heard about his attention to detail, his professionalism and skill. His kindness to those who worked with him and for him. One lovely entry in those condolence pages really stood out for me. It came from a couple out in Clonmeen in Errill whom I know well. They simply said: *Deepest sympathy to the Dunphy family on the sad passing of Jack. He was a wonderful tradesman , he roofed a shed here in 1953 on a wet Saturday. May he Rest in Peace.'* Jack was only 22 at the time but already that combination of skill, kindness and generosity was evident.

As Jack lay in his coffin over the last few days his hands have been joined together intertwined with his rosary beads in a gesture of prayer. Having listened to Jack's family, and others who knew him well, tell me something of his story I was conscious that throughout his life, those hands have been intertwined with so much of what he has achieved in his ninety one years.

Recently, I came across a very interesting reflection on the importance of our hands:

"Our hands tell who we are. They are believed to be perfect subjects of the mind. As physical labour shows in the callouses on our palms, so does gentlenessor strength. Nothing else expresses human behaviour in so many ways. With our hands, we work, play, love, threaten, show joy or grief. Sensitive symbols of faith and friendship, our hands draw to us everything and everyone we love. Marvellously made and directed by the mind's eye, the mind's ear, and the heart's desire, our hands continually express our lives.....What words cannot say, the hands can express with all tenderness and love.

Our hands tell who we are. Well certainly, Jack Dunphy's hands were key to so much of who he was. Those were the hands that lovingly carved, shaped and fitted with unique skill many a stairway in homes across the midlands. Those were the hands that helped to build countless homes for people and for farm animals. But they were also the hands that held the playing cards in twenty-five, the books and newspapers he loved to read and the remote control which allowed him to enjoy endless hours of sport on television. They were also the hands that learned to cook and care for himself when Ann died twenty years ago. Those hands were no stranger either to the rosary beads, prayers offered, loved ones remembered before His God. One of the things you as a family most talked about was your father's incredibly strong faith. A faith that was built on a complete trust in God. A faith that expressed itself in that great Irish tradition of offering up whatever suffering or pain that came his way

Breda, Kathleen and Agnes, Larry and Sean. Our hearts and our sympathies go out to you today. The death of a parent brings a new kind of unbelonging into a person's life. And that's understandable. Our parents are our first friends. No friend we will meet on life's journey will have been so interested or committed to us. No other friend will have known our first step or first smile or our first tear. Together with your mother your dad called you by your names for the first time, names that they chose for you. Together with your mum your dad was the first

creator of home for you. He created a safe place for you, a safe place to be born, to take initiative, to think outside the box, to believe, to face and overcome the challenges and curve balls that life would present you with, a safe place to start the journey of loving yourselves. In so many ways your dad was the heart of your home and today the heart is not at home. He is gone to a different place. It is also true to say that today your home is joined to heaven in a most profound way. Jack has gone today to his eternal home, our eternal home, the ultimate togetherness, where no separation or darkness or parting will ever happen again. Today, your dad joins your mum, his parents and family members, the communion of saints, the family of God. We honestly are not sure what heaven is really like; it's beyond our imagining; it's our very best thought, our most carefully wrapped gift; our longings all fulfilled. And even though I know that you are all very sad and heartbroken today you know that, because of his faith, where he has gone is the fulfilment and goal of all he ever lived for.

Jack has died in these days of mid-November, the month of All Souls and All Saints. All around us landscapes are bare. Dead leaves are falling to the ground, but they are not alone. The seeds of new life are also falling. Jesus thought of this when he spoke of the grain of wheat. It falls to the ground; it seems to die but in the act of dying and being received into the earth it gives birth to the green sprout, beautiful and bountiful. In the winds and storms of late autumn the seeds are shaken from the branches. Sometimes they are caught by a gentle breeze, other times it is a violent storm that snatches them. In the end they fall to the welcoming earth which is ready to receive them and is life giving. Dying is part of living and a step along the road of on-going life. We are here today because it is Jack's time to die. *He has fought the good fight, He has finished the race and he has certainly kept the Faith*" In the autumn of his life, he released his spirit to God; was received by his welcoming love and made ready for a new spring in God's life-filled presence forever.

The poet puts it more beautifully when he says:

Is there a leaf upon the tree

The Father does not see.

Leaves fall, so do we all

Return to earth, to sod.

Sparrows and Kings,

And all manner of things

Fall, fall into the hands

Of the living God.

Jack has fallen. He has been caught.

May he now rest in peace in those Loving Arms. Amen