

Richard Cahill RIP
Funeral Mass
Thursday 10th November 2022

*Richard Cahill, Moore Street, Rathdowney, Co. Laois. November 6th 2022.
Suddenly and unexpectedly at home in the presence of his heartbroken family,
his loving wife Mary and his adoring daughters Rachel and Rebecca, mother-in-
law Maeve Thornton, brothers-in-law Tommy and his wife Mary, Johnny and
his partner Bernie, cousins, relatives, neighbours and a wide circle of friends.*

Readers: Rachel and Rebecca

**Prayers of Faithful: Laura Thornton, Ger Rooney, Antoinnette
O'Sullivan, Paul Walsh**

Bread and Wine: Siobhain Murphy and Imelda Carroll

**Racing Post, Roscrea College Rugby hat, Collection of medals and
Jerseys, Rathdowney/Errill and Laois**

Golf Captain

Family photo of Richard, Mary, Rachel and Rebecca

Rosary Beads from Fatima

One of the possible consequences of the War in Ukraine is that in this approaching Winter we may be faced with a shortage of power and energy possibly leading to occasional electricity blackouts. It does not happen so often these days but at some time or other we have all experienced an occasion when electricity is suddenly and unexpectedly cut off. Everything comes to a halt; the television goes blank. The radio goes silent, the computer switches off, the cooker goes cold, and worst of all the lights go out. We are caught in a blackout; we are plunged into darkness. For a while at least we feel lost, helpless, and perhaps even frightened. That image has been very real again in this town in these days in the aftermath of Richard Cahill's death. A powerful and yet gentle light had gone out in Moore Street, in this parish community but

most especially in the lives of Mary, Rachel and Rebecca, his extended family, neighbours and friends.

Nothing can prepare us for something like this, neither our education, our upbringing nor our experience of life or faith can save us from the effects of such a blow. There is only one thing we can do; just as when an electricity blackout occurs, we stumble and stagger desperately looking for a light, any light, even that of a humble candle. And so, we too, gathered here this afternoon, reach out for the only light which can penetrate this awful darkness, the light of Christ.

For many years Richard was a regular reader here in this church. One of the readings he would read at Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve is one from the Prophet Isaiah where we hear the lines:

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light;

On those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone

As much as we will need to hear those words on Christmas Eve in about six weeks' time, we need them much more here in this church today. Jesus is present here among us in Rathdowney this afternoon. His light shines on us who are in darkness and in the shadow of this very sad and sudden death.

Despite the very raw sadness that we all feel today I am also reminded that this funeral Mass allows us the opportunity to celebrate and give thanks for the life of Richard Cahill. I am told by those who were around at the time that there was great excitement in Moore street among the neighbours, friends and extended family when a first and only child, a baby boy was born to Dickie Cahill and Molly Loughlin on the 17th of April 1961. Because they had waited seven years for his arrival and because he was their only child, Richard was always going to be extra precious to his parents. Sadly, Richard's mother, Mollie died when he was only twelve years old and just as he was about to begin Secondary school in Roscrea.

Over the last few days, I have read down very carefully through the condolence messages for Richard on RIP.ie. The sense of shock and sadness is palpable throughout those messages but beyond that a picture of the man we honour with Christian burial today begins to emerge. The words that most often occurred in those many messages were words like **gentleman, friend, friendship, horse racing, lover of all sport including hurling, golf, billiards, cards**. From his days at Cistercian College Roscrea there was an abiding love for rugby. I know from Mary and the girls that Richard's last full day of life last Saturday was filled with watching The Breeders Cup in horse racing and Ireland playing South Africa in the Autumn rugby international.

Some of you may know that a few weeks ago Richard underwent prostate surgery in Dublin. It was a very successful operation, and he was recovering well from it. However, he was, naturally very nervous about that surgery. In the days before he went to Dublin, he decided to write down a few of his wishes in the unlikely event that he might not recover from the surgery. Mary, I think he asked you not to look at those notes until you had to. Among the wishes that Richard had were four songs he would like sung at his funeral. You have already heard one of them and we will hear the rest throughout this Mass. His first two choices were Lovely Rathdowney and Lovely Laois. Those song choices reminded me that Richard was both a proud Rathdowney man and a proud Laois man. I asked Richard's neighbour, friend and local GAA historian Alex Stenson to tell me something about Richard's hurling career. Lest I leave anything out I will quote directly from Alex here:

"The 1970's could best be described as a "Golden Age of Juvenile Hurling" within the parish, and it was during this period that Richard enjoyed tremendous success. His talents were recognised at an early age. In 1973, he captained our U12 team, albeit unsuccessfully, however, success was just around the corner. In 1975 he won U14 and Féile titles. 1976 was particularly rewarding, capturing the U16 and Minor Titles.

He repeated that feat the following year, while also adding the U17 crown. He went on to add further Minor titles in '78 and '79 to complete a unique 4 in a row alongside Billy Bowe, John Delaney and Paddy Curran. In 1980 as a member of the St Kieran's squad (Errill/Rathdowney combination) he won an U21 title. His talents were also recognised by the County Selectors, a member of our County Minor squad in '78 and '79. In '78 he had the honour of captaining the Laois team, defeated by Kilkenny in the Leinster Final. In 1981 he lined out with the County U21's. Around 1979, he made his debut with the local Senior team. Unfortunately, we had limited success, a few Tournament wins his only reward. Injury curtailed his career; however, he continued his close association with the Club joining our committee in 1983 where he served as PRO for a number of years. He also took on the role of Selector, at various levels, including Senior."

Richard also represented this community, in Golf, in Quiz competitions in Billiards and Snooker, being recognised in the Leinster Express Sports Awards as 'The Player of the Year'

But the sport that Richard was most associated with over the years and the one he derived the most satisfaction and perhaps not a little frustration from was the GG's. While he approached the sport from a very different perspective, perhaps it should be no surprise that Richard Cahill would have a love of horses. He came from a rich family tradition of Farriers and Blacksmiths at the Forge on Moore Street long before it became a Petrol Station. Richard went to race meetings up and down the country and of course for many years made an annual pilgrimage to Cheltenham. I don't know much about the art and skill of betting on horse races, but I suspect that those who engage in it in a serious way rarely reveal the true extent of their wins or losses. I'm told that when Richard's racing friends would ask him had he a "winner" – his usual response was "I did, but I didn't have enough on him". I was also told a story which I suspect isn't true but then why should the truth get in the

way of a good story. The story goes that one year in Cheltenham Richard met a man from Belfast and he got chatting with him. For some reason the Belfast man revealed to Richard that he was from the protestant tradition. Later in the conversation Richard told his new friend that often before a big race he would light a candle in the nearest Catholic church as a prayer for a successful outcome. The man from Belfast, not familiar with the tradition of lighting candles in churches listened with great interest and decided to give it a try. Unfortunately, after many unsuccessful attempts he eventually complained to Richard when they ran in to each other a few days later. Richard enquired if he was lighting the long candles or the short ones? "The short ones" replied his friend. "Ah! That explains everything," said Richard. "The short ones are for the dogs to win"!!

Whatever about lighting candles for success at the races, Richard was no stranger to churches and certainly no stranger to this one. As I mentioned earlier He was a reader here for many years and together with you Rachel He had a regular slot every Easter reading the Passion on Palm Sunday and Good Friday. The sad irony is that the story of Jesus' untimely death on Good Friday which Richard read here on so many occasions is now intimately linked to his own story and to your story as a family. Mary, Rachel and Rebecca, this past five days has been your journey to Calvary as you bear the cross of losing the husband and father you adored and who adored you in return. Today you too stand at the foot of the cross just as the other Mary and her women friends stood at the foot of the cross on that First Good Friday. Rachel, when you and your dad finished reading the Passion each year on Good Friday the story on that day ended with Jesus dying and later his burial. We do know however that was not the end of the story. Jesus rose from the dead three days later on Easter Sunday. I am very conscious that your own Good Friday began last Sunday morning and it may take a long time for you to move on from the rawness of this grief and loss. I

hope and I pray, and I know that everyone else here prays the same that you will be carried in these days, carried and cared for by family, neighbours and friends. Only then will you at some point be able to see a glimpse of that Easter Light again.

For Richard himself, even though his life has ended abruptly and much sooner than he or any of us would have wanted, He can borrow those words from St. Paul in today's second reading:

"the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.

Richard, you have and now may your gentle soul rest in Peace Amen

Thank Yous

Dr. Maeve Carroll,

Mater Private Staff,

Hermitage Staff,

Dr. Barry Jones in Kilkenny,

Emergency Services who were so good on Sunday, Fire
Brigade, Gardai, Ambulance Service, Fr. Jackie Robinson, the
Moore street neighbours, Extended family

**Mary, Rachel and Rebecca would like to invite you to the
Golf Club after the burial for Refreshments**