

Jim Kilcare RIP
Funeral Mass
Rathdowney Church
Monday 15th May 2023

*James (Jim) Kilcare, 6 Ossory Terrace, Rathdowney, Co. Laois and late of Laois County Council. May 12th 2023. Peacefully at his residence surrounded by his loving family. Beloved husband of Josephine (nee Ryan), devoted father to John, Norma, Olwyn and the late James Jnr. Beloved grandad to Sinead, Holly, Chloe and her husband Ger, Jack, Thep and Lucy and great grandad to Frankie and Culainn. Beloved brother to Kathleen, Lil, **Paddy**, Anne and the late Jackie. Sadly missed by his brother-in-law Donal, sons-in-law John and Conal, daughter-in-law Martina, Nuala, Claire, nephews, nieces, extended family and friends.*

When I sat down with Josephine and her family on Friday to talk about today's funeral inevitably there was a lot of sadness that we were actually having to plan a final goodbye for this much-loved husband, father and granddad. But as our conversation evolved stories were recalled and many of them were the cause of huge laughter. The one that stands out for me is the one about the caravan that left Rathdowney to head west but never returned. Jim's idea of a perfect family holiday was to head towards the coast and the beach. For us who live in Ireland's most inland county, the coast and the sea hold a particular fascination. While more recent trips brought Jim and a large contingent of Rathdowney family and friends to Tramore the earlier Kilcare family holidays normally headed for Salthill in Co. Galway. Well, it seems that one year they went, the car pulling the caravan was not in the best of shape with a very dodgy carburettor. During the week in Salthill Jim announced that the carburettor was gone completely and would have to be replaced. However, the only way he could afford to pay for the carburettor was to sell the caravan. This news was greeted with devastation by the Kilcare children who wondered if they would ever get to go on holidays again. The caravan was sold in Galway, a new carburettor was bought and there must have been some money left over

because on the journey home Jim stopped at a filling station where he spotted a tent for sale and bought it. That was probably poor compensation for the beloved caravan, but it least held open the possibility of future adventures. In more recent trips to Salthill Jim had been upgraded to a hotel or an apartment with a balcony from which he loved to simply look out at the ocean.

Somewhat inspired by that whole story I want to continue my reflections today by asking you, in your imagination, to come with me on a journey, a journey to one of those beautiful beaches off the coast of Salthill or Tramore or some other favourite place. I would like you to imagine yourself standing on the seashore, watching the waves come in. At a certain point you fix your eyes on one particular wave which is a long way out. Tall and majestic, it stands out from the others by reason of its frothy mane. Full of power and beauty, it is capable of carrying enormous weights on its crested back. You watch it roll forward, driven by the wind and pulled by the gravity of the moon. As it moves forward bits of it begin to spill off. However, as it nears the shore, it gathers all its resources together and raises itself to its full height. Then it touches the bottom and topples over, spilling out its contents down to the very last drop. These rush forward towards you with much hissing and seething. It delivers the last drop right at your feet. It has exhausted itself completely. It has given itself away totally. It has been spent utterly. Then, having gently caressed the sand at your feet, it immediately begins to withdraw. Its work done, slowly and without fuss, it ebbs away. It slips back to join the great ocean whence it came. There it will be re-assembled in some new combination of molecules and droplets, and on another day, it will be washed up on another shore.

So it is when an older person dies. Once they were strong, healthy and laden with human freight. But at some point, they go over the top and a decline sets in. Finally, the shore of death looms up ahead. But that is alright for their work is done. They have given themselves away

completely. They have nothing left. They withdraw gently from us, and after death delivers them onto the shore of eternity they return to God, the Source of their being. Their work is done. Even though Christ was only thirty-three when he died, he was able to say, "Father, I have finished the work you gave me to do." It is a great blessing to be able to say that one has finished one's life's work. In the early hours of last Friday morning, Jim slipped away back to the ocean from which he came, back to God the source of his being.

When someone lives into their 84th year there is a sense of completeness of fullness, and notwithstanding the sadness which is felt by family and loved ones, their funeral Mass allows us to truly celebrate their life's journey. Despite living more than 83 years, in modern terminology, the carbon footprint of Jimmy Kilcare's life was very small indeed. Apart from those annual trips to the sea, the many excursions and rallies in his beloved vintage cars and of course criss-crossing the roads of Laois in his County Council lorry Jim lived all of those years within a very short radius of this church here in Rathdowney.

Jim was born in Donaghmore on the 4th of February 1940, a second child of six born to John Kilcare and Johanna Kissane. Just two days later he was brought to Grogan church to be baptised by Fr John Kennedy. His godparents were Robert McKelvey and Elizabeth Tierney. From an early age Jimmy developed an interest in cars and mechanical things. His first job was as a mechanic at Kellys here in Rathdowney. He later moved to be a Lorry Driver with Laois County Council a job he continued to do until his retirement. Jimmy of course is synonymous around here with all things Vintage. He was a founding and very active member of the local Vintage association, and he must have been very proud when the National Vintage association established their Headquarters in his native village of Donaghmore some years ago.

One night when he was in his early twenties Jim found himself at carnival dance in the Showgrounds probably only a stones throw from

where we are gathered now. It was a night that would change his life forever because that was when he met you, Josephine. The rest as they say is history and you were married in Grogan on the 17th of October 1967.

On that Autumn Day up in Grogan, standing before the altar and Canon Kieran Joyce you made solemn promises to each other, for better for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health till death would do you part. He would also have asked you if you were willing to accept from God the children he may send and raise them to the best of your ability. Of course, you answered yes to that but no couple on their wedding day knows what those fateful words will demand of them in the years to come. Josephine ye have had almost fifty-six years of married life. From my vantage point and by your own admission ye were like a pair of love birds, ye were each other's best friend . I thought of those words from Don Williams' song

*You placed gold on my finger
You brought love, like I've never known
You gave life to our children
And to me, a reason to go on*

*You're my bread when I'm hungry
You're my shelter from troubled winds
You're my anchor in life's ocean
But most of all, you're my best friend*

*When I need hope and inspiration
You're always strong when I'm tired and weak
I could search this whole world over
You'd still be everythin' that I need*

In those fifty-six years of marriage ye will have experienced the Joyful, the Glorious but sadly also the Sorrowful mysteries of life. The most sorrowful mystery of all for you came thirteen years ago with the death

of your beloved son James. No parent should ever have to stand at the grave of their child. I know that James' death had a profound and lasting effect on your lives, and it shook you to the core. It caused you to question so much including your faith in a God who seemed to be absent. How can a good God allow such horrible things to happen. Josephine, I wasn't long here when I met you one day and you asked me some very direct questions about all that. I'm not sure my answers then no more than what I'm saying here today can respond to the sadness and pain you feel in your heart. The only thing I can do when faced with that "Where is God" question is to ask you to look up at that cross behind me. That is our God hanging up there and Yes, I believe he is here and I believe he was here thirteen years ago when you all last sat together in those front seats at James' funeral. The God we believe in always inhabits our sadness. He always desires to be at the centre of those events in our lives which we cannot understand ourselves. The gospel passage I read a few minutes ago told us something of what happened that day on Calvary and there was another figure in that picture too, a broken-hearted mother standing underneath the cross of her son. The reason why Jesus Christ can be really present with us at times like this and nothing can separate us from his love is because of that cross and what he went through. If He had triumphantly climbed down from that cross and escaped all the human suffering that went with it, and spared his mother the heartache she was going through, would he have anything to say to James and Jimmy's heartbroken family today? I think not. As it is, the only real source of hope and healing, the only glint of light, for any family who occupies these front seats at a funeral, is that somehow the suffering and pain is intimately linked with the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. But just as your suffering and pain and James and Jimmy's suffering and pain and deaths are linked with Jesus, so too, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead allows us the exact same hope. You mentioned to me the other day that Jimmy loved Easter. What happened on that cross is part of the Easter story but not the end of the story. The story ends over there in that beautiful Easter Garden which Jimmy's brother-in-law Donal helped to design and create. The tomb is empty, Jesus rose from the dead. The message from that empty tomb is that just as your suffering

and pain and James and Jimmy's suffering and pain and death are linked with Jesus, so too, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead allows us the exact same hope.

I would like to leave you with two final thoughts today.

I sometimes think of an event I attended many years ago. The guest speaker was the then president of Ireland Mary McAleese. The president gave a short speech, but I never forgot it. She said that in her experience of life there were two types of people in the world: Radiators and Drains. Now we all have experienced the drains in our lives, those people who literally DRAIN us of every bit of energy because of their negativity and pessimism. We are very fortunate though if we also know the radiators, those people who radiate love and warmth and positivity. When I think of Jimmy Kilcare, a gentle gentleman, always dressed in a shirt and tie even when working in his garden, I believe he was the quintessential radiator.

The final reflection is one which you might be familiar with, but I think these very well be words Jimmy could use to say goodbye today.

It was beautiful as long as it lasted, the journey of my life, I have no regrets whatsoever, save the pain I'll leave behind.

Those dear hearts who love and care, and the heavy with sleep ever moist eyes, the smile in spite of a lump in the throat and the strings pulling at the heart and soul,

The strong arms that held me up when my own strength let me down, each morsel that I was fed with was full of love.

At every turning of my life I came across good friends, friends and family who stood by me, even when the time raced me by.

Farewell, farewell my friends, I smile and bid you goodbye.

No, shed no tears, for I need them not, all I need is your smile, If you feel sad, do think of me, for that's what I'll like, when you live in the hearts of those you love, remember then..... you never die

when you live in the hearts of those you love, remember then..... you never die. Jimmy May your gentle soul rest in peace