

Joan Dempsey RIP
Funeral Mass
Durrow Church
Thursday 2nd June 2022

Peacefully at Midlands Regional Hospital Portlaoise. Predeceased by her beloved father and mother Patrick and Bridie and sister Claire. Survived by her devoted husband Richard (Dickie), sons Ken, Kieran, Patrick and Finian. daughters Muriel and Sarah, grandchildren Lina, Shane, Grace, Caitriona, Conal, Jack, Joe, Orlaith, Oisín, Eoghan and Finian, great grandchildren Josh and Leah, sister Muriel, brother Pat. Sadly missed by her sisters in law Monica and Patricia, daughters in law Simone, Rosarii, Jinnie and Niamh, nieces, nephews, relatives, neighbours and friends.

Some years ago I received a gift of a beautiful book of poetry edited by Caroline Kennedy President John F Kennedy's only daughter. Introducing a section of poems about motherhood, Caroline writes the following:

"But I can certainly say, like everyone does, that becoming a mother is the best thing that ever happened to me. Having a child defines us for the rest of our lives. No matter what else we do, we will always be that person's mother. We give our children the gift of ourselves, and they give us so much in return....Each mother-child relationship teaches us our limitations and our strengths. It changes us in constantly unfolding ways and entwines us in the unpredictable mystery of another life"

I'm sure it is fair to say that being a mother to *Ken, Kieran, Patrick and Finian. daughters Muriel and Sarah*, defined Joan for the greater part of her life and she was certainly entwined in the unpredictable mystery of your lives. I came to know Joan at many card tables as a quiet, gentle person and somewhat reserved. When I asked you her family to describe your mam, I heard words like Caring, consistent, colourful, kind understated, bright an angel. Dickie your word summed up perfectly what she was to you; Everything. That big motherly heart expanded over the years to embrace and welcome *Simone, Rosarii, Jinnie and Niamh* her eleven grandchildren *Lina, Shane, Grace, Caitriona, Conal, Jack, Joe, Orlaith, Oisín,*

Eoghan and Finian, and her two great grandchildren Josh and Leah, .To all of you, our hearts and our sympathy go out to you today as you say farewell to Muddy who has played such a significant role in all of your lives.

The journey of Joan's 84 years of life began when she was born in North Street Skibbereen Co. Cork on the 25th of February 1938. The happiness of her young childhood was shattered when at just 9 years old she lost her mother Bridie. Joan had to grow up quickly to care for and support her siblings. At the age of 20 Joan moved to Dublin to work in Arnott's. In the early 1960's many young people from the country gravitated towards the various dance venues popular in the city. The National Ballroom (which was probably the Copper Face Jacks of its day) was not one which Joan Spillane regularly frequented but on one particular night she did go there, and she met a dashing young man from Durrow. They did know something of each other as Joan had family ties in Durrow. Dickie and Joan were married in Rathgar in Dublin in 1965. They continued living in Dublin for five years before moving back here to Durrow in 1970. Dickie, you and Joan were blessed with 57 years of marriage. Ye were not only great Bridge partners together, ye were great partners in life too, each other's best friend and to use your own word Dickie, ye were *everything* to each other. Despite the sadness you feel today Dickie this is also a moment to thank God for the blessing of such a long and happy marriage.

Fifty-seven years of marriage and being a mother to six must surely have meant that Joan knew all the mysteries of life, the joyful, the glorious and sometimes the sorrowful ones too. Through all those mysteries of life Joan was sustained by many of the qualities spoken of in that first reading today from the Book of Proverbs which describes the Valiant woman, the woman of strength who invites good every day of her life, the one who does not neglect her tasks taking pride in her inner resources and strengths. She speaks with Wisdom and teaches in a kindly way. In addition to those great human qualities Joan also was sustained in good times and in bad by a very strong Catholic Christian Faith. I was struck by the very prominent place given to The Sacred Heart on the wall of Dickie and Joan's kitchen. The purpose of devotion

to the sacred Heart of Jesus is to focus our hearts on receiving and returning God's love with gratitude, with all our heart, soul and strength. It is perhaps appropriate that we gather here on the 2nd of June for Joan's funeral because June is the month of particular devotion to The Sacred Heart. In the words of St. Paul in the second reading today, the time of Joan's departure has come, she has fought the good fight, she has finished the race and she has certainly kept the faith. At the end of her life's journey, we entrust her today to the protection and care of the Sacred Heart.

I would like to leave you with two little reflections. The first one Sarah gave me yesterday and it in many ways sums up how you Joan's family are feeling today.

We little knew the day that God was going to call your name.

In life we loved you dearly, in death we do the same. It broke our hearts to lose you the day God call you home.

You left us peaceful memories your love is still our guide. And though we cannot see you, you are always at out side.

Our family chain is broken and nothing seems the same but as god calls us one by one the chain will link again

I was reminded of this last little reflection because of what is happening across the water this weekend. You may know that in Britain they are celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne. When the queen's mother died twenty years ago the Times of London published on it's front page a lovely reflection. I'm not sure how a woman from West Cork will feel about being linked to British Royalty but I think the words of the reflection are as a appropriate for Joan as they were for another wife, mother and grandmother.

We can shed tears that she is gone

*Or we can smile because she has lived.
We can close our eyes and pray that she will come back
Or we open our eyes and see all she has left behind.
Our hearts can be empty because we cant see her
Or we can be full of the love we shared
We can turn our backs on tomorrow and live yesterday.
Or we can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.
We can remember her and only that she's gone
Or we can cherish her memory and let it live on.
We can try and close our minds, be empty and turn our back
Or we can do what she'd want: smile, open our eyes
Love and go on*

Joan, may your gentle soul rest in Peace.