

Joe Ryan RIP
Funeral Mass
Errill Church
Saturday 15th January 2022

Joe Ryan, Templequain, Errill, Co. Laois. 13th January 2022. Peacefully in the exemplary care of all the staff in Fennor Hill Care Facility, Urlingford and in the loving arms of his family. Predeceased by his wife Sheila (née Delaney) and their angel Michael. Sadly missed by his daughter Olivia, son-in-law Dave, grandchild Johanna, sister Peggy (Bowe), brothers-in-law, sister-in-law, extended family, dear neighbours and friends.

I understand that Joe loved music and he particularly loved the music of Foster and Allen and Big Tom. In recent years Joe became very familiar with the wonders and possibilities of The iPad. Particularly during the last two years of Covid the iPad was in a way Joe's bridge and window to the outside world. I think he used it regularly to tune into and participate in Mass here locally in the parish, but the other great advantage was that he could listen to his favourite music at any hour of the day or night. So perhaps it is appropriate that at the end of Mass today I'm going to use the iPad to play one of Joe's favourite singers, Big Tom. The song I'm going to play is one I'm sure Joe was very familiar with, and it seems kind of appropriate for Joe Ryan. It is called '***You are going out the same way you came in***' One of the verses of that song says;

*Oh you're going out the same way you came in
Makes no difference who you know or where you've been
Makes no difference who you are
Skid Row Joe or superstar
You're going out the same way you came in*

Now Joe Ryan was a long way from Skid Row but neither did he see himself as a superstar. Nevertheless, from listening to you his family I believe that Joe was well aware of something we should all be well

aware of and that is as the song says, we come into this world with nothing in the material sense and when we leave it we leave we can take nothing either. Such an awareness leads us to see life in a simpler way and it leads us to know what is really important. Joe liked things to be simple and that certainly is how he wanted his funeral to be.

I suspect Joe was not a man given to swearing but the priorities in his life can be summed up in four 'F' words. Family, Farming, Friendship and Faith. Perhaps a few words about each of those words.

Joe's family was a relatively small tight knit one. He was born on the 2nd of May 1940 to Michael Ryan and Margaret McMahon of Templequain. He was baptised the next day in Grogan church at that font over there. His godparents were Michael and Frances Campion. Incidentally on the rare occasion that this happens I feel the need to draw attention to it. Joe was baptised by a Fr. Delaney, a native of Camross who was a priest here in the parish at that time. When got his confirmation in Galmoy church the bishop was Patrick Collier, another Camross man. And here we are today at the end of his life and his funeral mass is celebrated by another Delaney and another Camross man. With such a hat trick of blessings Joe is surely destined to go straight to heaven! Like so many children in the Templequain and Clonmeen area of this parish Joe and Peggy his only sibling would go to school in Graigue. In the early 1970's Joe was to meet Shelia Delaney from Ballinakill, and they married on the 25th of March 1974. I think family life was hugely important to Joe, both the family he was born into and the family he and Shelia created together. While family brought Joe the greatest joy and fulfilment in life it was also to be in his family life that he experienced the greatest pain and loss. Just two years after Joe and Shelia were married, he and you Peggy endured the tragic loss of both of your parents in the fire which also destroyed the home you had grown up in. Joe and Shelia also experienced the loss of their baby son Michael and then just twelve years ago Joe lost Shelia when she died. Yes, Joe certainly knew both the joyful and sorrowful mysteries of family life. Olivia it must have another joyful mystery when you and Dave moved to live with him in Templequain

and I have no doubt the arrival of Johanna was the glorious mystery of his life.

That 19mil spanner which I saw in your house yesterday, one of a vast collection that Joe had, is probably symbolic of his interest in mechanical things and that secret ambition he had to be an engineer. However, **Farming** was always going to be his way of life and he embraced it with great commitment and enthusiasm. Joe has remained very close to the soil of Templequain all his life. How many times has he cared for and nurtured that soil and prepared it to receive the seeds to be planted. I know that Joe was also a regular reader of the bible so I wonder if over the years he would have reflected on that mystery of nature that Jesus picked up on in today's gospel passage

unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it produces much fruit."

Jesus used that powerful image to reassure all of us that his death and our deaths would not be the end of our story. Yes, as the seed is buried so will Joe be and so we all will be, as the seed dies, so has Joe died and so will we, But also as the seed that dies brings forth new life so will Joe and will we too break forth into a new and eternal life.

In many ways reflecting on Joe Ryan the farmer naturally leads on to that third 'F' word of **FRIENDSHIP**. The friendships I'm thinking of in particular are those Joe enjoyed with his neighbours in Templequain and Clonmeen and Clonburn. Olivia, you used that beautiful Irish word Meitheal to describe the kind of friendship and relationship your dad had with his neighbours. In addition to helping and supporting each other on the farm or on the bog Meitheal also included that great Irish tradition of gathering in a neighbour's house sharing reminiscences of times gone past. In those beautiful words of Peig Sayers when she was describing what life was like on the Great Blasket Island she said: "*we helped each other and we lived in the shelter of each other*"

The fourth 'F' word to describe what was really important in Joe's life was of course, **FAITH**. That message of Jesus about death and resurrection is one of the foundation stones of our faith. Joe Ryan's **Faith**

was incredibly important to him. I mentioned earlier about how Joe used his iPad to participate in Mass locally during these past two years of restricted movement. However, my abiding memory of Joe will be of him coming here to Errill Mass on a Wednesday evening last year. He would sit there in the back seat, and I know he really appreciated being able to receive the eucharist. Perhaps quite unusually for many Irish Catholics, Joe's strong faith was nourished not only by the reception of the eucharist but also by his regular reading of the bible. The passages he read may not always have made sense to him, but Joe always fully understood that it was the Word of God and that made it important for him. Going back to those words of Big Tom's song, Joe Ryan may be going out the same way he came in in terms of material things.

However, he does go out and up to his God with a life of faith that has been practiced and lived to the full. Joe Ryan can surely borrow those words of St. Paul in today's reading: *the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.*

Joe you have, and now may your gentle soul rest in Peace.