

Kieran Begadon RIP
Memorial Mass
Cullohill Church
Saturday 8th October 2022

Kieran Begadon was born in Aughmacart on Friday the 29th of January 1943. It was in the middle of the Second world War or the emergency as it was known in Ireland. Just a very short distance across the water in Wales many young men were leaving towns and villages and heading off to the frontlines of war. A song written a few years before became a very popular anthem to help raise the spirits of the young soldiers. The song was called *We'll keep a welcome in the hillside*. It was to remind them that the people who stayed at home would “*keep a welcome on the hillside*” for them when they would return. Sadly, many of those young men never did return. The words of the song included the lines:

*Far away a voice is calling
Bells of memory chime
Come home again, come home again
They call through the oceans of time*

*We'll keep a welcome in the hillside
We'll keep a welcome in the Vales
This land you knew will still be singing
When you come home again to Wales*

As we gather in Cullohill Church this afternoon, even though we do not have Kieran physically here with us, in a sense we are here to welcome him home to his native place *to keep a welcome on the hillside* that he left so many years ago. This is the church where Kieran was baptised, received his First Holy Communion and also celebrated his Confirmation. I assume this is a place he came on many occasions as a young boy and teenager, it is a place where he thought and prayed about the possibility of becoming a priest. Having gone to Secondary

School in Belcamp Kieran did pursue the vocation journey spending time at various houses of formation run by the Oblate Fathers, Kildalton in county Kilkenny, Cahermoyle in county Limerick, Belmont House in County Westmeath and Inchicore in Dublin. Kieran began his teacher training with the Oblates but in the mid 1960's he realised that the path of priesthood was not for him. The urge and the calling to be a teacher remained. Having spent a year in England, Kieran emigrated to Canada in 1966. Initially and perhaps following in the Begadon family tradition of working with metal Kieran worked in the Hamilton Steel Mill. While working there he pursued his dream of becoming a teacher and later obtained his teaching certificate. While teaching he also became a Basketball coach and that in turn led to a rather interesting additional career. He realised there was a need to produce trophies for Sporting achievement. Thus over 50 years ago the Aran trophies, awards and engraving was created in the basement of his home, a thriving business which I gather is still run by Kieran's daughter Roxanne.

Some time after Kieran emigrated to Canada he met the woman who was to become his wife, Cathy Douglas, a native of Scotland. The fruit of their love and their marriage was their son and daughter, Stephen and Roxanne. In later years their family circle would open to welcome Stephen's wife Mary and Roxanne's husband John. Then came the arrival of their four cherished grandchildren, Sydney and Ryan and Benjamin and Moira. Sadly, Kieran and Cathy's marriage did not last as long as they had hoped or intended. Twenty-five years ago, Kieran was to find love again when he met his partner Joanna Turchin.

This then is a very abbreviated biography of the man whose life we honour here today in his native parish. Those of you who knew Kieran as a brother, as an uncle as a neighbor and friend will have your own memories of him and together your memories would give a much better insight into the kind of man he was. I gained some insight about Kieran from my conversation with Paugie and Geraldine and Kathleen the other day but also from the various obituaries I read, particular from Canada. I was struck by the line which said that 'Kieran gave back to

society in many ways'. A generosity of spirit, a practical expression of the faith which had been nourished at home in Aughamacart, in this church and in this community, a generosity which had led him to consider and pursue a vocation as priest and later as a teacher, that generosity continued to find new expression as a volunteer with The Good Shepherd Centre in Hamilton and as a driver with the Juravinski Cancer Hospital.

I was also struck by the beautiful testimonies given by some of his friends and God children about the influence Kieran had in their lives, how he had encouraged them to become the best versions of themselves. He was obviously a man with a can-do kind of attitude to life, a life in which as the first reading alluded to today, there was a time and a season for so many things. There was clearly no time for regrets. One friend said: *He had a famous line which I will always remember "shoulda, woulda, coulda. You can't live your life thinking I should have done this, I would have done that or I could have done the other"*
You have to keep moving forward. ALWAYS.

I have no way of knowing what Kieran's thoughts or feelings were as his almost eighty full and interesting years of life came to a close a few weeks ago. How did he view what was to come next? It is an interesting question for all of us to reflect on. Mindful of that question can I leave you with two final thoughts. There was a beautiful picture of Kieran which appeared on his obituary in Canada. In that picture he is holding what is obviously his beloved dog. When I saw that picture, I was reminded of a story which I came across some years ago.

A sick man turned to his doctor as he was preparing to leave the examination room.

"Doctor, I am afraid to die. Tell me what lies on the other side."

Very quietly, the doctor said, "I don't know."

"You don't know? You, a Christian man, do not know what is on the other side?"

The doctor was holding the handle of the door; on the other side came a sound of scratching and whining, and as he opened the door, his golden retriever sprang into the room and leaped on him with an eager show of gladness.

Turning to the patient, the doctor said, "Did you notice my dog? He's never been in this room before. He didn't know what was inside. He knew nothing except that his master was here, and when the door opened, he sprang in without fear.

"I know little of what is on the other side of death, but I do know one thing. I know my Master is there and that is enough."

My last thought is really to share with you some words of a song which I know was one of Kieran's favourites and which we will hear sung later in today's mass I think. It is simply called *The Swallow* and I think it was recorded by Brendan O Dowda and Brendan Boyer among others.

The second and third verses of that song could indeed be Kieran's parting words to all of you his family and loved ones as he takes his final journey;

*Oh graceful swallow, bear a message of love,
for on your journey lies the land of my heart
Then glide downwards as you see from above
a sea swept isle from which we had to part.*

*Among those shores are all that I care or live for,
my home, my loved ones, waiting for my return
As down you sweep, shed my blessings upon them,
that tell of love which in my heart still burns.*

Kieran, may your gentle and generous soul rest in Peace

To far off lands, the swallow now is speeding
for warmer climes and sun-drenched foreign shores
while cooler breezes tell of summer fading
my heart with you, into the heavens will soar.

Oh graceful swallow, bear a message of love,
for on your journey lies the land of my heart
Then glide downwards as you see from above
a sea swept isle from which we had to part.

Among those shores are all that I care or live for,
my home, my loved ones, waiting for my return
As down you sweep, shed my blessings upon them,
that tell of love which in my heart still burns.

Each winter long console me in my dreaming,
that you fond swallow on your gleaming wing
Will speed as I would wish I could go speeding,
straight to their hearts, and with you my love bring.