

**Lot Campion RIP**  
**Funeral Mass**  
**Rathdowney Church**  
**Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

Loughlin (Lot) Campion, Kyle, Rathdowney, Co. Laois. December 30th 2022. Peacefully at Portlaoise Regional Hospital. Predeceased by his wife Kathleen and his brothers Michael, Eddie and Sean and his sister Frances and recently deceased (2nd January) his sister May. Sadly mourned by his loving family Elaine, Pat, Michael, Conor and Aidan, grandchildren Caoimhe, Roisin, Eimear, Lauren, Eoghan, Michael and Stephanie, daughters-in-law, son-in-law, brother-in-law Tommy, nephews, nieces, relatives and friend

**Homily**

I'd like to begin these few words today by sharing a poem which some of you will be familiar with. It is simply called the dash.

**The Dash**

by Linda Ellis

I read of a man who stood to speak  
at the funeral of a friend.  
He referred to the dates on the tombstone  
from the beginning...to the end.

He noted that first came the date of birth  
and spoke of the following date with tears,  
but he said what mattered most of all  
was the dash between those years.

For that dash represents all the time  
that they spent alive on earth.  
And now only those who loved them  
know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own,  
the cars...the house...the cash.  
What matters is how we live and love  
and how we spend our dash.

So, think about this long and hard.  
Are there things you'd like to change?  
For you never know how much time is left  
that can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough  
to consider what's true and real  
and always try to understand  
the way other people feel.

And be less quick to anger  
and show appreciation more  
and love the people in our lives  
like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect  
and more often wear a smile,  
remembering that this special dash  
might only last a little while.

So, when your eulogy is being read,  
with your life's actions to rehash...  
would you be proud of the things they say  
about how you spent YOUR dash?

I understand that Lot attached a lot of importance to dates and remembering significant dates. The two dates which may in time appear on Lot's tombstone are the 21<sup>st</sup> September 1929 and the 30<sup>th</sup> of December 2022

In between those two dates is a little dash which for Lot represents more than ninety-three years of life.

*“What matters is how we live and love  
and how we spend our dash.”*

Well, how did Lot Campion spend his dash? Many of you who knew him for many years could answer that question very well. In recent days I have gained some little insight into the man whom we commend to the love and mercy of God today and whose life we celebrate in this funeral mass.

I think it is fair to say that all of us are very much defined, shaped and influenced by the family we are born into, the family we may go on to create, the people we meet on the journey of life and the place where we live particularly if we have lived there all of our lives.

Lot Campion was born into the soil of Kyle and he lived there for all of his ninety three years of life. Despite living in the one townland all of his life I think it is fair to say that his life was certainly not insular. While he had both a great knowledge and love of this wider parish community he also looked outwards to the world that lay beyond these local parish boundaries. I mentioned that he had a particular interest in dates and events and that went hand in hand with his love of history. Having lived into his tenth decade Lot had witnessed and observed many momentous days of history. Being born in 1929 exactly halfway between the ending of the First world war and the beginning of the Second he was acutely aware of what was happening in the world around him as he grew up. In 1939 on a short stay with his aunt in Dublin when he was just ten years old, he happened to witness the arrival of German Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution. That was a memory he never forgot and perhaps it had a significant effect on him. Lot's interest and knowledge of the wider world was further enhanced in recent years when he was able to hear about his children's travel exploits across the globe and to visit Elaine in France and Conor in the United States.

Back home in Kyle, Lot Campion's priorities could perhaps be best summed up in three 'F' words, Farming, Faith and Family. As a dairy farmer whose day was punctuated by the cows timetable the practice of faith had to be worked around the cows and that Lot did that, even if it meant going to the monastery in Roscrea to a later mass.

Family was very important to Lot, both the family he was born into and the family that he and Kathleen created together. As the one who continued to live in the Campion home Lot I believe was very conscious that Kyle would always be a place of hospitality and welcome for his siblings and their extended family. It is a sad and extraordinary coincidence that the last two members of the Campion family of Kyle should die within a few days of each other. I understand that when Mai's daughter Helen, went to visit her mam in Urlingford on New Year's Eve to tell her of Lot's death they spoke of how all the Campion siblings had died in December. Mai looked at the clock in her room and realising there were only a few more hours left in December, she jokingly said, "I better get my skates on". I have no doubt that the two of them will be arriving at the Gates of Heaven together in these days and there will be a great welcome from all those family members who have gone before them.

Going back to that poem at the beginning.....

*For it matters not, how much we own,*

*the cars...the house...the cash.*

*What matters is how we live and love*

*and how we spend our dash*

Yes, indeed as our first reading from Ecclesiastes noted, there has been a time and a season for so many things in Lot Campion's life. But sadly, today this is also a time for mourning, a time for tears. And the tears and the pain and the mourning are not really for the loss of a great farmer, or a man steeped in local and world history. The greater loss is for the kind of person Lot was, a 'Gentleman' a word used by so many

neighbours and friends in the condolence pages of RIP.ie. Most of all the pain comes from the loss of a beloved father to you Elaine, Pat, Michael, Conor and Aidan, a devoted grandfather to you Caoimhe, Roisin, Eimear, Lauren, Eoghan, **Michael and Stephanie**,

Lot died last Friday, the second last day of the year. As the light in Lot's earthly life was being extinguished every house and street was festooned with light. Of all the symbols of this Christmas Season, Light is probably the most evocative. The story of how light triumphs over darkness has so much to do with why we celebrate Christmas on December 25th (at least in the Northern Hemisphere!) The pagan peoples of ancient times saw the world as a great cosmic struggle between light and darkness. At a certain period of the year the darkness seemed to be getting the better of the light as the days became shorter and the dark nights became longer. Each year they feared that darkness would finally overcome the sun and the light and that their world would be destroyed. Then every year without fail something would happen around the 21<sup>st</sup> of December. The sun would begin to fight back. Ever so gradually the days became a few minutes longer as the sun regained its strength. It was a cause for celebration and so began the winter festival of lights.

When Christianity came along it was looking for an appropriate time of year to celebrate the birth of Jesus. For Christians Jesus was very much the Light of The World who had overcome the darkness of sin and death. They borrowed the pagan concept of the struggle between light and darkness and light's ultimate triumph after December 21<sup>st</sup>.

Christians settled on the date of December 25th to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, The Light of the world. Instead of the triumph of the SUN God the Christians changed the vowel and it became the triumph of the SON of God. The Pagan Festival of Lights became the Christian Festival of Christmas.

For Lot Campion, the struggle between light and darkness also came to an end on the days after 21<sup>st</sup> of December and the light and promise of new life and resurrection triumphed over the darkness of suffering and death. In addition to all the other Christmas lights in this church we have lit another one for Lot today, the light of this paschal candle the first light of Easter the reminder to us of resurrection and Christ's triumph of life over death.

With that hope and confidence, Lot can certainly say with 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, from now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness.*

I want to leave you with a little reflection which I think might very well be words Lot could use to say goodbye today.

*I have got my leave.*

*Bid me farewell, my friends!*

*I bow to you all and take my departure.*

*Here I give back the keys of my door  
---and I give up all claims to my house.  
I only ask for last kind words from you.*

*We were neighbours for long,  
but I received more than I could give.  
Now the day has dawned  
and the lamp that lit my dark corner is out.  
A summons has come and I am ready for my journey.*

Lot, may your gentle soul rest in Peace