

**Marion Roche RIP**  
**Funeral Mass**  
**Moycarkey Church**  
**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2023**

*Formerly of Horse and Jockey, Co. Tipperary, Dublin and Tenerife.  
On September 18, 2023, Marion passed away peacefully, after a short illness  
in the loving care of the staff of St. Mary's Nursing Home, Shantalla, Galway  
with her much loved family by her side. She is predeceased by her husband  
Thomas.*

*Beloved mother of Michael, Josephine, Majella and Moira, adoring grandmother  
to Aideen, David, Jane, Kelly, Stuart, Siobhan, Michael, Ciara and Ava and  
great grandmother to nine. Proud mother-in-Law to Lynette, Daniel and  
Aaron, beloved sister to Kathleen, Joan and JJ. and a dearly loved friend to  
many. Mourned and sadly missed by all.*

Over these past few days as I tried to get my head around what to say in  
a homily for Marion's funeral a number of thoughts came to my mind.  
The first thought that came to me were the words of a song. Not a song  
that was ever recorded by her son-in-law, I think. The words I'm  
thinking of are from a song by Tom Jones and it's called; 'She's a Lady'  
Some of the words of that song are:

*Well she's all you'd ever want,  
She's the kind you'd like to flaunt and take to dinner.  
Well she always knows her place.  
She's got style, she's got grace, She's a winner.*

*Well she's never in the way  
Always something nice to say, Oh what a blessing.*

*Well she never asks for very much and I don't refuse her.  
Always treat her with respect,  
What she's got is hard to find, and I don't want to lose her*

The reason that song came to my mind was because that word *Lady* kept cropping up over and over again as I thought of my own contact with Marion over the years but also in the many comments about her in recent days.

The second thought that has been very much in my mind were the words of that first reading today from The Book of Proverbs.

*Who shall find a valiant woman?*

*Who shall find a woman of strength?*

*She is worth far more than jewels.*

*Her associates all have confidence in her and benefit from her expertise.*

*She invites good, not evil, every day of her life.*

*She does not neglect her tasks;*

*She willingly works with her hands.*

*She works diligently, taking pride in her inner resources and strengths.*

*She opens her heart to the needy, she is generous to the poor.*

*She is strong and respected, and not afraid of the future.*

*She speaks with wisdom, and she teaches in a kindly way.*

*Those who are close to her praise her.*

*Charm is superficial and beauty fades,*

*But the woman who honours the Lord is to be praised.*

Those of you who have known Marion all of her life or all or even some of your lives might very well say that there is more than a strong echo of so many of those attributes in the story of the valiant woman, the Lady whose life we honour at this funeral Mass.

As we gather here in Moycarkey today, the parish where Marion was born, this church where she was baptised, received her First Communion and Confirmation a third thought comes to mind and that is that all of us are very much defined, shaped and influenced by the family we are born into, the place we were born, the events of our childhood and early life, and the people we meet on the journey of life.

Marion Fitzgerald was born in the townland of Kevinsfort, Horse and Jockey on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> of May 1937, the third child of seven born to Josephine and John Fitzgerald. What was probably a fairly idyllic childhood was shattered for Marion and their family when her mother died in 1951. Marion was just thirteen with four younger siblings. Their father was broken-hearted not just by the loss of his wife but also as he witnessed the strains on his young family. What must that have been like for a young thirteen-year-old girl? I suspect that those lines like :*'Who shall find a woman of strength'...**'She works willingly with her hands, She works diligently, taking pride in her inner resources and strengths.* may well find their roots in those early years of Marion's life when she took on something of a mother figure to her younger siblings at such an early age while also coping with the grief and loss of her own mam.

A young man from Thurles who had first seen Marion when he attended her mother's wake, was, a short few years later about to change Marion's life forever. Tom Roche was probably every teenage girl's ideal boyfriend. He was full of personality, a talented boxer, represented Tipperary in cycling, threaded the boards with Thurles operatic society and played the saxophone in a band. One wonders how he had time to work or meet the love of his life. We know he did both and as Michael said in his eulogy at his dad's funeral in Tenerife ten years ago next month, *when he chose Marian it was the best choice Tom ever made and he would be the first to admit it, never initially in open conversation but always deeply felt and expressed to his friends when his more tender side emerged.*

The beginning of her married life may not have been what Marion had dreamed of. I'm not sure if you could use the language of eloping but Tom and Marion did head for England where they married and welcomed their first born, Michael. For various reasons they decided not to remain in England. It was a long way from Tipperary, and they missed the network of friendships and family support back home. When Michael was just six months old, I think they came back to Tipperary and settled in Thurles. Life was not exactly easy for them as they raised their young family. Their life's journey would later take them to Galway, back to Thurles and then to live in Dublin. In 1991 Tom would make the rather dramatic decision to move with Marion to live in Tenerife. The

first few months were difficult for Marion to adjust but she came to love her life in the sun.

The one thing that Marion missed most while living in Tenerife was her garden. She loved to work with the soil and grow beautiful flowers and plants.

Marion has died in these September early autumn days. Dead leaves are beginning to fall to the ground, but they are not alone. The seeds of new life are also falling. Because of her love of gardening, I believe Marion would have understood well when Jesus talked in today's gospel of the grain of wheat falling on the ground, the seed being sown in the soil. The mystery of nature is that the wheat grain, the seed must first actually die in the ground before the new life comes from it. That mystery of nature provides the basis for our Christian understanding of death and resurrection. Dying is part of living and a step along the road of on-going life. We are here today because it is Marion's time to die. In the autumn of her life, she released her spirit to God; was received by his welcoming love and made ready for a new spring in God's life-filled presence forever.

I would like to leave you with two final thoughts. The first one is really for you Michael, Josephine, Majella and Moira. I have no doubt that what made Marion most proud and what gave her the greatest satisfaction in her life was to be your mother. As I listened to the four of you talk about her the other day I could get a real sense of the influence she has had on you and how she has been part of the joyful, glorious and sorrowful mysteries of your lives. She delighted in your children, her beloved grandchildren and later her great grandchildren. A few weeks ago at a funeral in our parish a daughter shared the following poem about her mother. It is simply called **Your Mother Is Always With You!** by Deborah R. Culver\* I offer it to the for of you today.

She's the whisper of the leaves as you walk down the street.

She's the smell of certain foods you remember, flowers you pick, the fragrance of life itself.

She's the cool hand on your brow when you're not feeling well.

She's your breath in the air on a cold winter's day.

She is the sound of the rain that lulls you to sleep, the colours of a rainbow.

She is Christmas morning.

Your mother lives inside your laughter.

She's the place you come from, your first home.

She's the map you follow with every step you take.

She's your first love, your first friend, even your first enemy.

But nothing on Earth can separate you.

Not time.

Not space.

Not even death.

My final thought in a way brings me back to the day Marion was born, the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 1937. I'm not sure how closely events across the water would have been followed in Moycarkey but on the day after Marion was born a very significant event took place in London. It was the Coronation of the present king's grandparents, George the sixth and Queen Elizabeth who later became known as the Queen Mother. When the queen Mother died in 2002 the Times of London published a

beautiful reflection about her on their front page. It's words may be familiar to you but I think they are as appropriate today as we say farewell to the Lady Marion a much loved mother and grandmother as they were twenty one years ago.

*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 can't 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*

Marion May your gentle soul rest in peace