

Mary Burke RIP
Funeral Mass
Rathdowney Church
Tuesday 27th June 2023

*Mary Burke, Erkina Court, Rathdowney, Co. Laois. 24th June 2023. Peacefully at Portlaoise Hospital. Predeceased by her brother Jim Burke. Sadly mourned by her son **Martin Donohue (Abbeyleix)**, daughters **Michelle (Ruske) Longford, Laura (Bergin) Lisduff Errill**, grandchildren Kendall, Summer, Joe, Harry and Emily, brother Jack Burke, Martin, Harry and Caroline, nephews, nieces, relatives and friends.*

Readers and Prayers: Harry and Martin

A few months ago, Mary asked me to come and bless her home in Erkina Court. My distinct memory of that visit was that Mary's home was already well and truly blessed. Everywhere I looked there was religious imagery. The Sacred Heart, the Blessed Virgin and saints galore. I also understand that Mary had a *go-to* saint for every need and occasion, whether it was passing an exam, doing an interview or expecting a baby, Mary had some prayer, some novena someone up there in heaven whom she could pray to and ask for help.

So, what does that say to all of us gathered here today? To me it says that Mary was a woman of Faith, a faith that was woven into the bits and pieces of her daily life. She lived her life very aware of God. She was also particularly close to her namesake Mary the Blessed Mother. She was a regular visitor To Mary's Shrines at Knock, Lourdes and Medjugorje.

It might be a good idea to dwell for a moment about the woman we call by various names and titles, The Blessed Virgin, The Blessed mother , Our Lady of sorrows, and countless other titles and names. But the one

characteristic of Mary that always stands out for me is that no matter what was going on around her or in her life, she continued to trust God. Now it cannot have been easy for her at times to keep faith and trust in God. I imagine she got quite a shock when the angel came and told her that she was going to have a baby. As a young teenage woman she was completely unprepared. But she trusted God that all would turn out ok. So many times in her life there were twists and turns and painful times and times when things did not turn out as she had planned and hoped. The worst was surely when her only son was crucified, and she had to stand at the foot of the cross helpless. And yet she continued to put her trust in God.

Now I'm not going to stand up here and make some great comparisons between Mary of Nazareth and Mary of Knockiel and Erkina Court. The one thing I believe however that they had in common was that they both trusted that things would work out even when plans went wrong and life threw them both curve balls they were not expecting or wanting.

Mary Burke was born here in Rathdowney on the 11th of July 1948. She went to school locally and later worked in what was McCarthy's shop. When she met and married her husband, Michael in 1972 they moved to Durrow where their three children, Martin, Michelle and Laura were born. Sadly, Michael and Mary's marriage broke down. Mary initially moved back here to Knockiel in Rathdowney but then for fourteen years she lived and worked in Roscrea. She worked as a carer with The Irish wheelchair association. When she retired from that job she again gravitated back here to her hometown and moved to live at Erkina Court

Through all those different changes and phases of her life, Mary continued to trust in God's love and his presence in her life. The other great characteristic of her life which sustained her in good times and in bad was her sense of humour, her wit and light heartedness.

Today we gather here in Rathdowney to say farewell to Mary. It was her own wish that she would spend the night before her funeral here in the church. Surrounded by the images of the many Saints she was so

familiar with but more significantly in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. In a certain sense this church was Mary's Departure Lounge as she waited to embark on her final journey and I have no doubt that Mary was comfortable here among her friends last night. Today they will be waiting to welcome her to her new home in Heaven.. I would like to finish by sharing this familiar poem

*I wait in the lounge of departure
I know not the time of my flight
I hope that it's way off in the future
but it could be I'm flying tonight*

The flight I await goes to Heaven

*I know that it's lovely up there
for I've read it's fine brochure the bible
and I speak to them oft in my prayer.*

*It cost very little to go there
you take nothing with you at all
and you pay by the way you behave every day
and you wait for St Peter to call*

*As I wait for the start of my journey there's so many things I can see
like some one in need of a word or a deed
so I do what's expected of me*

*so I wait in the lounge of departure
never to sure when to fly
but I hope when I do there's a chance I'll meet you
We can all pay the fare if we try*

Mary, May your gentle soul rest in Peace.

