

**May Whyte RIP**  
**Funeral Mass**  
**Cullohill Church**  
**Friday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

May Whyte (nee Campion), Parknahown, Cullohill, Co. Laois. January 2nd 2023. Peacefully at St. Luke's Hospital, Kilkenny. Predeceased by her brothers Michael, Eddie, Sean and her sister Frances and recently deceased (December 30th) her brother Lot. Sadly missed by her husband **Tommy**, much loved mother of **Joe, Ger** (Moreau), **Mary-Paul** (Delahunty), **Helen** (Walton), **Clem and Lourda** (D'Arcy), her adored grandchildren, **John, Tommy, Bill, Tommy, Adam, Ruby, Luke, Hannah, Lilly, Orlaith, Eadaoin, Jimmy, Emma, John, Isobel and Amelia**, daughters-in-law Marlene and Marie, sons-in-law Simon, Steve, Eamon and Dermot, sisters-in-law Peg and Mary, extended family, relatives, neighbours and friends. The family would like to say sincere thank you to Theresa, Stephanie and staff and all her friends at Fennor Care Facility.

## **Homily**

It is difficult to begin this homily without acknowledging again the uniquely difficult week this has been for the extended Campion family of Kyle. A week ago, today May's older brother Lot died in Portlaoise hospital. As I mentioned yesterday in Rathdowney, when Helen visited her mam on New Year's Eve to tell her about Lot's death, they discussed how all the Campions of Kyle had died in December. Mai looked up at the clock in her room and seeing that there were not too many hours left in December she said 'I better get my skates on '. At that point May was preparing herself to attend Lot's funeral. Instead, God had another plan and that was that she should accompany Lot on his journey to the Father's house in Heaven. As I was reflecting on all of that over the last few days it also dawned on me that May and Lot will have at least one other companion on their journey to Heaven in these days and that is Pope Benedict. And as I thought further about May, Lot and Benedict I

thought how this week people have queued up to pay respects to all three of them, in Kyle, in Rome and in Rathdowney. Now the three of them are in a queue themselves to meet the Lord. And as I was thinking about these three pilgrims on their way to heaven, I thought about today's feast day because May's funeral takes place on little Christmas, Nollaig Na mhan the Feast of the Epiphany. At the heart of this feast is also the story of three wise people on a long journey to meet the Lord, the very same Lord that May, Lot and Benedict are traveling to meet today.

And then I'm wondering what kind of conversation might be happening between these three if they happen to meet in that queue. May will probably tell Benedict that she and Lot are from a beautiful place called Kyle which translates as Church and the Pope who spoke many languages and thought he knew everything there was to be known about church will be surprised to learn something new about it. Then there is the slight danger that Lot who like Pope Benedict, also grew up during the Second World War may engage the German Pope in some awkward conversation about that part of history and May will have to intervene and smooth things over. She may remind the men that they are going to meet the Lord on the feast of The Epiphany and that it is traditional to bring gifts. Whatever the two boys come up with May will have the advantage because she has known all her life that the best way to a man's heart is with one of her legendary cakes of Bread and an apple tart. I noticed in May's coffin there was a photograph of one of her cakes of bread so I suspect she will be well prepared.

And as the conversation in that heavenly queue continues suddenly there is the hush and the sound of keys dangling as St. Peter himself arrives to interview the new arrivals. He may well recognise Pope Benedict as one of his successors on earth but when it comes to getting access to heaven the criteria will be the same for all of them. And while Peter may be licking his lips at the sight and smell of the Parknahown Bread and tart, the questions will be the same for all of them: Were you faithful to your God, how did you treat the neighbours and did you do your best to be who God called you to be? Well, how do ye think May

will answer those questions? As far as God is concerned, I'd say he and May were not strangers. Her faith was a quiet one nourished by her own prayers and by the Eucharist she received on a regular basis. As I sat in Tommy and May's kitchen the other evening I could not but notice the large picture of the Sacred Heart which dominates one wall. I know that picture was not there as a piece of art or decoration. It was there as a statement of faith and an utter belief in the love and mercy of God. As for how May treated her neighbour, judging by the crowds that queued down the street outside the funeral home in Rathdowney for hours last night I suspect she didn't do that too badly either. And if May could show St. Peter a copy of that first reading that was read at her funeral today from the Book of Proverbs, he might get a further insight into the woman who knocks on Heaven's door today:

*Who shall find a valiant woman?*

*Who shall find a woman of strength?*

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

And as for the question 'did you do your best to be who God called you to be?' well the best people to answer that question would be you Tommy, her husband of almost 61 years her children Joe, Ger, Mary-Paul Helen Clem and Lourda, her adored grandchildren, John, Tommy, Bill, Tommy, Adam, Ruby, Luke, Hannah, Lilly, Orlaith, Eadaoin, Jimmy, Emma, John, Isobel and Amelia, You can all best answer that question because May's primary vocation in life was to be your wife Tommy, your mother and your grandmother. For all of, May was not just someone who loved you unconditionally, but she was the one who could create that unique experience of home and hospitality. That

gathering around the kitchen table where bread was broken, stories told problems solved and love was shared.

While I know the kitchen was May's sphere of operations for many years, what she could view from her kitchen window brought her so much joy and satisfaction. That of course was her flower garden where she grew so many beautiful things. The Dancer's Prayer

Giver of life, Creator of all that is lovely,

Teach me to sing the words of your song;

I want to feel the music of living

And not fear the sad songs,

But from them make new songs

Composed of both laughter and tears.

Teach me to dance to the sounds of your  
world and your people,

I want to move in rhythm with your plan;

Help me to try to follow your leading,

To risk even falling,

To rise and keep trying

Because you are leading the dance

One final thought to leave you with today. A few years ago, I attended the funeral of the mother of one of my priest friends. Towards the end of his homily the priest used some words which I have never forgotten, and I offer them to you as a family today:

we bury her body, but not her spirit.

we bury her hands, but not her good deeds;

we bury her heart, but not her love;

we bury her head, but not her memories. May Whyte, Valiant woman  
may you rest in Peace

