

Teresa Gilman RIP
Funeral Mass
Rathdowney Church
Friday 25th August 2023

Teresa Gilman (nee Young), 3 Newtownperry, Rathdowney, Co. Laois. 23rd August 2023, peacefully at home surrounded by her loving family. Sadly mourned by her husband Fintan, daughter Rose, sons Fintan, Michael, James and Patrick, son-in-law Chris, daughters-in-law Lorraine, Helen, Paula and Sarah, sisters Ann, Nuala and Essie, brothers Eugene, Robert and Jimmy, her loving 13 grandchildren, nieces, nephews, relatives, friends and carers and her beloved dog Bailey.

From my own conversations with Teresa over the years and particularly as I listened to Fintan and his family speak about Teresa I am very conscious that we are celebrating a funeral mass today for a woman whose life was so defined by her vocation to be a wife and a MOTHER. The Gospel passage I just read may have seemed a rather unusual choice for a funeral mass but I chose it for three reasons: Firstly it was the gospel read at every mass around the world last Sunday, Teresa's last Sunday of life, Secondly at the heart of that gospel story is a mother whose child was not well and she was determined to get help for her daughter. Despite the apparent indifference of Jesus to her and the hostility of the disciples this woman, this mother persisted precisely because she was a mother who would stop at nothing to get the best for her child. Who shall find a valiant woman, who shall find a woman of strength? I could have added, Who shall find a woman who could fight her corner and get her own way?

Thirdly the mother in the gospel as well as being stubborn and persistent, she was also a woman of great faith who knelt before Jesus and said Lord Help Me. I find more than an echo of the mother of Last Sunday's Gospel in the life of the valiant woman of strength we honour with Christian burial today.

Teresa Young was born on the other side of the Slieve bloom Mountains, in Clonaslee on Sunday 13th of February 1949. She was one of a family of twelve, six boys and six girls, and Teresa was the youngest girl. While still a young teenager living at home a chance visit by one of her brother's work colleagues was to change her life forever. It has to be said that the first impressions for Teresa cannot have been very promising because her brother and this fella from beyond Rathdowney had spent the day spreading Lime and when they reached the Young household they were pretty much covered in the grey stuff. However no matter what he looked like and no matter what Fintan could see through the fog of lime, a spark was lit that evening in Clonaslee that has been burning bright for almost sixty years. Teresa and Fintan were married on 28th of August 1968 which means that next Monday would have been your 55th wedding anniversary. After their wedding Teresa and Fintan came to live here at no 3 Newtownperry and the rest as they say is history. The fruit of their love was to be their five children Rose, Fintan, Michael, James and Patrick and in more recent times that love has expanded to welcome Chris, Lorraine, Helen, Paula and Sarah and of course thirteen wonderful grandchildren.

Many of the words, phrases and qualities described in that first reading today about the Valiant woman could indeed be applied to Teresa Gilman but none more so than those last lines which say:

Charm is superficial and beauty fades but the woman who honours the Lord is to be praised. The strength of character , those inner resources and strengths which so reflected Teresa's approach to life were matched by an equally strong faith and trust in her God. Over the past week or so as you kept vigil by her bedside on a number of occasions it seemed that her death was imminent and yet she fought on. As I looked at her on Wednesday afternoon shortly after she breathed her last I thought of those words from today's second reading from St. Paul *the time of her departure had come. She had fought the good fight. She had finished the race and most importantly for her, she had kept the faith.*

For all of those reasons and despite the deep sadness and emptiness that you Fintan and your family feel today and will feel on many other days, nevertheless there is a real sense in which we can celebrate and give thanks today for Teresa's seventy four years of life.

One of the words ye used to describe your mam was lucky. I know you were talking about how she might win at bingo or scratch cards or the occasional flutter on the Gg's. But I think there is a deeper sense of lucky here. Teresa was lucky in the family she was born into in Clonaslee, she was lucky the day the fella walked into to her house covered in lime but I know Fintan you would probably say you were the lucky one. So many times over the last while you have used the same phrase to describe Teresa; 'You couldn't find better'. She was lucky too with her children, From the kind of things she said I think she also very lucky with the spouses you brought into her life and into her family. She was even luckier to become the grandmother to thirteen grandchildren. But that luck worked both ways and from listening to ye I think ye would all agree that not only were ye lucky but also blessed to have Teresa as your mother. With that thought in mind can I leave you today with some words that were read here recently at a funeral by a daughter paying tribute to her mother. The reflection is entitled:

Your Mother Is Always With You! by Deborah R. Culver*

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.

Teresa, May your gentle soul rest in Peace