

**Tess Campion RIP**  
**Funeral Mass**  
**Rathdowney Church**  
**Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

*Teresa (Tess) Campion (née Browne), Levalley, Rathdowney, Co. Laois. 27<sup>th</sup> July 2023. Peacefully in the loving care of The Sacred Heart Nursing Home, Crosspatrick. Predeceased by her husband Paddy, brother Pat, sisters Mary (Whelan) and Peg (Smeaton). Sadly mourned by her loving family Margaret (Kelly), Maureen (Guilfoyle), Dave, Paul and Ray, her 11 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren, brother Sean Browne (Kinnity), extended family, neighbours, and friends.*

As I listened to David and Maureen tell me of their mam, Tess' life there were two words that stood out for me. The two words are very much related to each other; TIME and MEMORY. Those words are picked up in today's funeral liturgy for Tess when we heard Oisín read those beautiful lines from The Book of Ecclesiastes '*there is a time for so many things under heaven*' and Paul read from St. Paul about how '*the TIME of my departure has come*'. Later we will hear those beautiful words of Liam Lawton's song which I know Tess loved; '*there is a time for Remembering, a time to recall*' and of course that haunting song; '*Remember Me*'

There is a time to be born and a time to die.

Tess Browne was born in the townland of Tulla in the Parish of Kinnity, Co. Offaly on Wednesday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 1931. Following her school days, Tess went first to work at Egan's shop in Birr and later moved to Dublin to work for Clery's. Interestingly Tess' younger sister Peg, and later her older sister Mary had both ended up crossing the county bounds not only into County Laois but specifically here to Rathdowney initially to work but then both met and fell in love with two Rathdowney men, Terry Smeaton and Jack Whelan. Mary and Jack later

moved to England and married over there in Birmingham. Tess travelled across for their wedding and while there was encouraged to move over permanently for work which she did.

Tess was living with the Costigan family in Birmingham and one evening the man of the house brought home a work colleague for supper, one Paddy Campion, a native of Lisduff. Tess was asked to make the visitor a sandwich. Now that was probably the most important sandwich Tess ever made. *Whatever she put between those two slices of bread we will never know but it was enough to win Paddy Campion's heart.* While reflecting on that fateful but somewhat chance meeting I thought again of that beautiful line from the American poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson when he said: **People destined to meet...will do so, apparently by chance, at precisely the right moment.**

Tess and Paddy were married in Birmingham in August 1961 thus completing the hat-trick of the three Browne sisters from Kinnity marrying three Rathdowney men.

*There is a time for planting, a time for uprooting what has been planted.*

Paddy and Tess would spend the first ten years of their marriage in Birmingham where four of their five children were born. In 1971 the family uprooted and moved back here to Rathdowney, first of all to Kyle and later to Levalley. For many Irish people living in Britain the strong emotional and family ties were always a powerful motivation to return to live in Ireland, but the practicalities of such a transition often proved far more of a challenge. Leaving behind so many taken for granted facilities like bathrooms, running water and colour tv to face the prospect of raising a young family without those amenities is something we should never underestimate no matter how hard we find it to imagine.

Going back to those words from the Book of Ecclesiastes:

*What do people gain from the efforts they make? I contemplate the task that God gives humanity to labour at.*

What did Paddy and Tess Campion gain from the efforts and sacrifices they made. I would suggest the answer to that question lies somewhere in the fifty-three years of marriage filled with, love, laughter, affection, commitment and friendship.

While technically living in the parish of Galmoy I think it is fair to say that Tess and Paddy's primary commitment was to this parish of Rathdowney. For them the commitment to Family , Faith and Community was something of a seamless garment which enriched not only their lives but also the lives of so many others as well.

Tess enjoyed the regular contact with her two sisters Mary and Peg and their families and while her driving career was somewhat unsuccessful her trusted bicycle became her principal means of transport and a vital connection with friends and family. As a gifted builder and craftsman Paddy was never short of work and he went on to leave the imprint of his work and talent in every townland in this parish and beyond. Tess was the quintessential homemaker.

'a time for tearing, a time for sewing, a time for baking, a time for knitting.

Those knitting needles up here are not just a symbol of Tess's craftsmanship but also a symbol of how, for her, TIME was always to be used productively. If she sat down, it was to pick up those needles and create something. For a period of her life, Tess produced a new Aran jumper every week as part of her contract with a company supplying these uniquely Irish sweaters all over the world.

Tess was blessed with a great memory right up to the time of her death this week. In recent weeks she was reminding someone to get a card for the birthday of her great grandchild who she knew was going to be six. That gift of memory was supported by the unique diary which Tess kept for much of her life. The diary recorded a miscellany of all kinds of dates and events from the births and deaths of family, neighbours and friends to the results and scores in various sporting events. That unique album of memorial cards which Tess put together also speaks to us of the importance she attached to memory and remembering. Tess would sit

and turn those pages as she remembered and prayed for each of the beloved, family members, friends and neighbours who had gone ahead of her marked with the sign of faith.

So, this is some little insight into the valiant woman we honour with Christian burial today. Those of you who have known and loved Tess as a sister, a mother, a grandmother, an aunt, a friend or neighbour know much better than me about her strength of character, her gift for hospitality, her confidential listening ear and her ability to see the best in everyone even when the evidence was not all that obvious.

Throughout her life, one of the great guiding lights for Tess has been a quiet, understated but nevertheless rock like Christian Faith. That Faith was never more certain or more obvious than in her attitude and approach to the prospect of dying. In recent years, as her health weakened and her body became more fragile, Tess often used that image of the Departure Lounge to describe where she was at. While she clearly loved her life and her family and delighted in every morsel of news about your lives, Tess also looked forward to where she was going next, and she had no doubts about it. She would be going to meet Paddy, her sisters, Peg and Mary, her brother Pat, her parents and so many others but most of all she would be going to meet her God face to face.

Even in our work as priests, it is a rare privilege to be with someone as they are dying. I realise that it is a frightening prospect for some and one they might wish to avoid. Nevertheless, it is a very sacred moment to witness a long and beautiful life coming to a conclusion and the door opening to a new beginning. In that moment Earth and Heaven meet each other in a unique way. Last Thursday morning in Cross Patrick I had something of that privileged experience with Tess. She was still very conscious when I sat down by her bedside. While I could not clearly hear what she tried to say to me, when I spoke to her about the journey she was about to make she very distinctly said to me, 'very soon'. We prayed the rosary, and she followed those prayers as she was able. Then somewhat hesitantly I decided to finish with the prayer which is called the commendation of the dying. Conscious that Tess could hear and

understand every word I was saying she would know that this prayer meant that it was time to leave the departure lounge because her flight had been called.

I leave you with the words of that prayer of commendation as we say our final farewell to Tess today.

Go forth, Christian soul, from this world in the name of God the almighty father, who created you,

May you return to him

Who formed you from the dust of the earth.

May holy Mary, the angels and all the saints

Come to meet you as you go forth from this life.

May Christ who was crucified for you

Bring you freedom and peace.

May Christ who died for you

Admit you into his garden of paradise.

May, Christ the true shepherd,

Acknowledge you as one of his flock,

May he forgive all of your sins,

And set you among those he has chosen.

May you see your Redeemer face to face this day

And enjoy the vision of God forever.

Rest in Peace Tess.

Imagine there is a bank that credits your account each morning with \$86,400.

It carries over no balance from day to day.

Every evening deletes whatever part of the balance you failed to use during the day.

What would you do? Draw out every cent, of course!

Each of us has such a bank. Its name is TIME.

Every morning, it credits you with 86,400 seconds.

Every night it writes off, as lost, whatever of this you have failed to invest to good purpose.

It carries over no balance.

It allows no overdraft.  
Each day it opens a new account for you.  
Each night it burns the remains of the day.  
If you fail to use the day's deposits, the loss is yours.  
There is no going back. There is no drawing against the "tomorrow".  
You must live in the present on today's deposits.  
Invest it so as to get from it the utmost in health, happiness and success!  
The clock is running. Make the most of today.

To realize the value of ONE YEAR, ask a student who failed a grade.  
To realize the value of ONE MONTH, ask a mother who gave birth to a pre-mature baby.  
To realize the value of ONE WEEK, ask the editor of a weekly newspaper.  
To realize the value of ONE DAY, ask a daily wage laborer with kids to feed.  
To realize the value of ONE HOUR, ask the lovers who are waiting to meet.  
To realize the value of ONE MINUTE, ask a person who missed the train.  
To realize the value of ONE SECOND, ask a person who just avoided an accident.  
To realize the value of ONE MILLI-SECOND, ask the person who won a silver medal in the Olympics.  
Treasure every moment that you have! And treasure it more because you shared it with someone special, special enough to spend your time.  
And remember that time waits for no one.  
Yesterday is history.  
Tomorrow a mystery.  
Today is a gift.  
That's why it's called the present!