

Ann Carroll RIP
Funeral Mass
Errill Church
Friday 6th of October 2023

Ann Carroll (nee Owens) The Derries, Knockahaw, Errill, Co. Laois and formerly of Rosemount, Roscrea, Co Tipperary, 4th of October 2023, in the loving care of the wonderful doctors, nurses and staff of Portlaoise Hospital. Predeceased by her husband Bobby, brothers Thomas and Joseph, her mother Jane and son in law Ger. Deeply regretted by her loving daughters Anne, Catherine, Jackie, Lisa and Teresa, sons Robert, Philip and Michael, her brother in law Martin, with special needs, whom she took care of all her married life, Sisters Lena and Madeleine, brothers Sean and Francis, brothers in law and sisters-in-law, her 23 grandchildren, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, nephews, nieces, relatives and friends and special mention to Megan from Comfort Care who looked after Ann so well in recent times.

Symbols: Knitted cardigan, Cigarettes, her phone - family connections, picture of Martin, Rosary beads, Elvis Presley picture

Readers: Carol and Teresa

Prayers of the Faithful: Emma, Louise, Kate, Kaylee, Jack and Denis

Bread and Wine: Katie and Louise

Last Sunday week I had the opportunity to spend a little time with Ann in the hospital in Portlaoise. During that encounter we celebrated the Sacrament of the Sick. Part of that ritual involved me anointing Ann's hands with holy oil. I was very struck by the reverence with which Ann took part in the sacrament and even though she was quite weak when I invited her to do so she immediately presented her two hands for the anointing. As I blessed those hands with the oil I thought of how sacred those hands already were and how each line told part of Ann's life story. I was conscious of just 'how willingly she had worked with those hands' as a mother, as a grandmother, as a homemaker, as an employee as a carer and as a friend.

As I listened to some of you speak to me of your mam on Wednesday at home in The Derries, I thought again about those hands and how central they were to so much of what you talked about. These were the hands that cooked and cleaned, the hands that changed and washed countless nappies. School uniforms and so much more. The same hands that became very creative when introduced to a ball of wool and a pair of knitting needles and could finish a jumper in one night's sitting. These were the hands and the fingers that also held her beloved cigarettes. They were also the hands that mastered her smart phone not only allowing her to stay in touch with loved ones both near and far but also to discover so much new information contained inside this magical little screen. Having grown up in an era Where hands were used for work and practical tasks, she was not unique in discovering that when grandchildren came into her life then those hands could also be used to show affection and love.

All through Ann's life her hands were also familiar with a rosary beads and as she fingered those beads in prayer she came closer to her God and his mother. Like Mary of Nazareth, Ann of the Derries could reflect on the Joyful, Glorious but also the sorrowful mysteries of life. The Joyful mysteries no doubt included her 45 years of marriage to her beloved Bobby, the births of children and watching you all grow and succeed in life. The Glorious mysteries probably came in the form of you her 23 grandchildren. But no woman can be the mother of eight and not also experience the sorrowful mysteries of life too. Sorrowful mysteries also came in the form of illness, accidents and other setbacks and losses in her life.

But through all of that Ann showed great resilience in life. That resilience came from a combination of a very strong character maybe even with a stubborn streak, combined with an equally strong faith. *Who shall find a Valiant woman, Who shall find a woman of strength? She works diligently taking pride in her inner resources and strengths.*

Ann has died in these October 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. As someone who almost fifty years ago having been born in Paddington London and grown up in Roscrea moved to live in the Derries, in the heart of the country close to nature Ann became very aware of the rhythms of farming life and the changing seasons of the year. Living so close to the soil I'm sure that Ann 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. Ann was very attuned to this mystery of nature, the seed falls to the ground; it seems to die but in the act of dying and being received into the earth it gives birth to the green sprout, beautiful and bountiful. In the winds and storms of autumn the seeds are shaken from the branches. Sometimes they are caught by a gentle breeze, other times it is a violent storm that snatches them. In the end they fall to the welcoming earth which is ready to receive them and is life giving. Dying is part of living and a step along the road of on-going life. A time for giving birth, a time for dying. We are here today because it is Ann'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. As Bobby did before her, Ann can also borrow those words from St. Paul's letter to Timothy today; *the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.*

I leave you today with a familiar reflection which was written some years ago to say farewell to another much loved mother and grandmother. As you let go of Ann today you can also say

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

Ann May your gentle soul rest in peace