

Betty Taplin RIP
Funeral Mass
Rathdowney Church
Friday 17th November 2023

Elizabeth (Betty) Taplin (nee Cleary) (retired nurse) Tonlegee, Raheny, Dublin 5 and formerly Grogan, Rathdowney, Co. Laois, died peacefully on Monday, November 13th, 2023, after an illness bravely fought, with her loving daughters by her side. Predeceased by her loving husband Les and her sisters Dinah and Peg. Betty will be sadly missed and forever remembered by her heartbroken children Aileen, Nuala, Cormac and Séan, her sisters Mary, and Jane, her granddaughters Sarah, Amy and Emilie, her great-grandson Patrick, sons-in-law Edward and Willie, nieces, nephews, cousins, neighbours and so many dear friends.

Readers: Sarah Lynam and Tina Barry

Prayers: Caroline Barry, Catherine Hyland, Melanie Jarra, Pádraig Cleary

Communion Reflection: Amy Lynam

The early summer of 1932 was a very significant and very historical time in Ireland. In just a few weeks at the end of May and early June a number of significant events happened. Amelia Earhart, the first woman to fly the Atlantic on her own landed in Ireland in late May. A few weeks later two scientists working in Trinity college made a significant breakthrough in the process which would lead to splitting the atom leading ultimately to the creation of nuclear energy. All through June 1932 thousands of pilgrims from all over the world began traveling to Ireland for the famous Eucharistic Congress which culminated in a million people attending Mass in the Phoenix Park in Dublin, the biggest gathering of people ever seen in these islands for many decades before and after. But back here in this parish in the townland of Rossmore, the

big news was the arrival on the 1st of June, of a third daughter for William and Christina Cleary. Five days later the baby girl would be baptised in nearby Grogan church and she was named Elizabeth. She would be known throughout her life as Betty. I should mention here that Betty's parents were living at that time with William's uncle Mick Breen. This man would be a very significant figure in Betty's life and she had huge affection for him.

Following her school days Betty, like so many of her contemporaries left this community to begin making a life elsewhere. She first went to Waterford to work in a shop and pub but later crossed the Irish sea to England. Betty was determined to begin a nursing career and this she did in St. Alban's in Hertfordshire. Needing a few more to share the financial burden of the accommodation she was renting, Betty persuaded her twin sisters Mary and Jane who at this point were working in Wales, to move to join her in the London area. In these post war years there were no shortage of jobs for young Irish people in Britain.

Apart from work opportunities there was I think a fairly vibrant social scene for the young Irish community in London. The Cleary sisters loved music and they loved to dance, and they were regulars threading the boards of the various Irish music halls in London. At some point, perhaps after Jane got married, Betty moved to a different house to live. It was a move which would change her life because it was there that she would meet her future husband, a fellow lodger and not insignificantly a fellow dancer, Leslie Taplin from Dublin. Following their marriage in 1960 Betty and Les spent a few years in London before moving back to settle in Raheny in Dublin.

From what I have gleaned about Betty there were a few very important constants which characterised all the threads and stages of her life. Even though she left here at an early age Betty had an abiding love and affection for her native Rossmore, Errill and this parish community.

Betty also had a lifelong very close relationship with her four sisters, Dinah, Peg, Mary and Jane and in turn with their families. There has also been a lifelong sense of style, love of fashion, sense of humour and fun. I think another constant in Betty's life has been her Catholic Christian faith. It was a faith not just observed in religious practice but also in her care and concern for others. That surely was part of her motivation in choosing nursing as a career. A few years after Betty and Les moved back to live in Dublin, Betty resumed her nursing career in the Meath Hospital where she worked for 23 years. Much of her nursing career was spent caring for vulnerable people with psychiatric as well as physical needs.

It takes a very special person to be a good nurse and it could be argued that psychiatric nursing is a vocation within a vocation. Sometimes nurses are spoken about in a patronising way, and I certainly don't wish to do that today but as a priest I go into to hospitals and care centres regularly and I see the extraordinary service that nurses give. They meet people at their most vulnerable and their care for them is something they never forget. I always think that nurses have a unique opportunity to make real that most significant sentence which Jesus uttered in in St. Matthew's Gospel "*Whatever you do to the least of these brothers and sisters of mine you do it to me*" Some years ago I came across a piece which is simply called a Nurse's prayer and in so many ways it is a retelling of gospel passage. It is God's address to a nurse:

*Be me in the world.
Be my voice to the deaf.
Be my faith where there is doubt.
Be my hope where there is despair.
Be my light where there is darkness.
Be my joy where there is sadness.
Be me in the world.*

Be my eyes to the blind.

*Be my consolation to those who need to be consoled.
Be my understanding to those who need to be understood.
Be my healing to those who need to be healed.
Be my love to those who need love.
Be my forgiveness to those who need to be forgiven.
Be my death to those who need me.
Be me in the world.*

- author unknown -

In her many years of nursing how many times must Betty Taplin have made that prayer a reality. We give thanks today for her life and her dedication.

I know that one of the great loves of Betty's life was working in her garden. Having been so close to nature she would have been very aware of the challenges and opportunities that each season brings. She has died in these November late autumn days. Everywhere we look, there are droves of dead leaves which have fallen from the trees in recent weeks and months but they are not alone. The fragile seeds of new life are also falling.

As a gentle gardener herself I believe Betty 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. The mystery of nature is that the wheat grain, the seed must first actually die in the ground before the new life comes from it. That mystery of nature provides the basis for our Christian understanding of death and resurrection. Dying is part of living and a step along the road of on-going life. We are here today because it is Betty'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.

After Communion today, Betty's granddaughter Amy will read that beautiful poem *The Gentle Gardener* by *Edgar Albert Guest*

The last few lines of that poem could so easily be Betty's parting words to all of us today:

*But, having lived and having toiled,
I'd like the world to find
Some little touch of beauty
that my soul had left behind.*

Betty, May your gentle soul rest in Peace AMEN