

Harold Lawlor RIP
Funeral Mass
Durrow Church
Friday 22nd December 2023

Harold passed away peacefully in his 101st year in the excellent care of the medical staff of St Luke's Hospital, Kilkenny surrounded by his loving family. Predeceased by his wife Sheila, brother Liam, son Billy and his grandsons Ronan and Glen. Deeply regretted by his daughters Dorothy, Cindy, Elaine, Karen and Jemma, his sons Harold, Oliver, Martin, Ron and Anthony, his sister in law Phyl, sons in law, daughters in law, his 31 grandchildren and his 47 great-grandchildren, his niece, nephew and a large circle of friends and neighbours.

Grandchildren not here today are

Chelsea, Katee, Angelina, Dean his partner Valentina and great grandson Emanuel..

Placing of bible and cross

Jemma daughter

Fintan. Grandson

Symbols of dad's life narrated by **Martin.**

Eric , Jessica , Louis & Harry , Michaela and Cameron all great grandchildren.

1st reading... **Harold** son

2nd reading.. **Karen.** Daughter

Prayers of the faithful read by

Kate , JD, Lola and Eirn all great grandchildren.

Cindy and Elaine will do the offertory gifts

Eulogy ... Daughter **Dorothy,**

Homily:

In our Catholic tradition, the funeral Mass allows us to do three different things. First and foremost, we are here today to commend Harold to the love and mercy of God. We pray that God will grant him one of the rooms in The Father's house in Heaven.

Secondly The funeral allows to gather, either in person or through the livestream to offer our support and sympathy to Harold's family, particularly his children; Dorothy, Cindy, Elaine, Karen and Jemma, his sons Harold, Oliver, Martin, Ron and Anthony, his sister in law Phyl, sons in law, daughters in law, his 31 grandchildren and his 47 great-grandchildren, his niece, nephew and a large circle of friends and neighbours. I'm conscious that some of Harold's family cannot be here in person today but are joining us on the livestream. I'm thinking particularly of Chelsea, Katee, Angelina, Dean his partner Valentina and great grandson Emanuel.

The third thing that this funeral Mass allows us to do is to celebrate Harold's life, and what a life it has been. The elder statesman of this parish community 100 years, five months and eleven days.

Harold was born on Sunday the 8th of July 1923, the first of two sons for Henry and Ellen Lawlor of Primrose Cottage, Blackhorse Ave in Dublin. The house that Harold was born into was unique as it was the only thatched cottage within Dublin's city limits. His parents also known as Harry and Dot had a Market Garden and a florist shop. They supplied flowers, fruit and vegetables to the Dublin Market and also sold their produce through their own shop. From an early age Harold was steeped in the family business and he loved everything about it. But it was not all about work for this young man. He also loved sport particularly, running, boxing and soccer. He went to night school to perfect his interest in drawing and art later developing his skill as an accomplished painter.

One of Harold's regular chores was to bring the produce early in the morning to the Dublin fruit and Vegetable market. One other early riser

he would regular meet at the market was a young woman called Sheila McKeown. Shelia was there to buy flowers as part of her training to become a florist. Shelia was also a friend of Harold's mother and would visit Primrose cottage on a regular basis. On one such visit Harold asked Shelia for a date and they went Ballroom Dancing. The rest as they say is history and Harold and Shelia were married on the 14th of June 1948. After a short initial stay in Dublin the young couple set out on a new adventure down the country in Co. Carlow They lived on the Dunleckney Maor Estate in Bagnelstown where Harold became the Head Gardener. They spent seven very happy years there during which their first six children were born. When the Dunleckney Manor Estate was sold in 1956, Harold, Shelia and their young family moved to Durrow. Here in Durrow, they lived on the Moyne estate owned by Captain Hamilton where Harold again was the head gardener. Captain Hamilton expressed an interest in exhibiting the produce grown in the glasshouses and gardens and thus began Harold's competitive career winning cups, trophies rosettes at shows all over Ireland and his winning streak continued right up to two years ago when he was still bringing home the prizes from the Tullamore show in his 99th year. In 1963 an opportunity arose for Harold and Shelia to begin their own business. They initially rented a two and half acre site which was to become known as the Bridge Gardens. Harold focused on growing fruit and vegetables for the Dublin Market while Shelia now had the opportunity to develop her floristry skill and business. They would later be able to buy the property they had been renting allowing them to develop the premises to include a shop and display area. I think it is fair to say that both Harold and Shelia's meticulous natures and commitment to excellence ensured that they built a brand and a business standard that was recognised and respected not just here locally but across the midlands and beyond. And all of this was achieved while their family grew to eleven in number. They also became immersed in so many aspects of life in this community. Harold particularly had an interest in helping young people, be that through coaching various sports or offering them opportunities for summer employment.

Incidentally, I only learned this week that Harold Lawlor and Joe Murphy (Joseph's father) arrived here in Durrow at almost exactly the same time. For two outsiders and they might even have referred to themselves as 'Blow Ins' They both made quite a contribution and left a pretty significant mark on the DNA of this beautiful place.

This a little snapshot of the life of the man we celebrate and honour with Christian Burial today.

There are two further thoughts I would like to share with you today.

One of the items that was presented at the beginning of Mass was a packet of seeds. Seeds and soil were so much part of Harold's life and his professional career. When Harold held a tiny little seed or a bulb he saw much more than the vulnerable non-descript little thing in his hand. He saw potential, he saw something beautiful, something nutritious and life giving. The journey which that seed made to its final fruitful and beautiful conclusion was the stuff of Harold's professional life. The message of today's gospel about the Sower and the seed is one which Harold must surely have identified with. He knew where seeds should be scattered and sowed in order to get the best result. He knew that the soil had to be right and rich and be prepared and cared for. When his job was done then it was over to God and to nature to do the rest.

It is no great surprise that a man who lived his life so in tune with and in harmony with nature would also have a very strong Christian Faith. Jesus used the imagery of the seed and the Sower in the gospel because for Him the seed represents the Word of God, it represents the gift of Faith we all receive at our Baptism. What we do with that Gift of Faith is the story of our lives. Harold was the Sower not just of the millions of seeds in his gardens over the years. He also took that seed of Faith, that seed of love and compassion, and he generously scattered it, sowed it and planted it. He planted it in this community, he planted it in the lives of so many people he came into contact with and particularly young people whom he mentored and coached different aspects of life. Harold also planted that seed of love and faith in the lives of his family and

through you the sowing and the planting continues in this community and beyond.

Jesus also came back to the imagery of the seed when he wanted to share something very profound with us about death and resurrection. Harold Lawlor, the Boss, the master planter and Sower of seeds knew what Jesus talked of in another gospel passage where he spoke of how the seed, every seed has to go through the act of dying before any new life can appear above the ground. That very same mystery of nature is at the heart of our Christian faith. As Christians we believe that death, our death, is not God's final word in our regard. Yes, we die and yes like the seed, we are planted, buried in the earth but that act of dying and burial also gives way to a new life. Today is Harold's time to die and as we bring him later for burial we realise in faith that, Durrow cemetery becomes the gateway for his new and eternal life.

A final thought today

Yesterday I was allowing my imagination to get the better of me and I was thinking that perhaps at the end of every month up in heaven all those who have died that month gather in one area and wait for admission, and perhaps there is a special room for all the Irish people. And because we always associate heaven with music and beautiful gardens there might be a particular section of that waiting room for Irish musicians and singers and gardeners. And so there near each other in the queue are Shane McGowan and Harold Lawlor. They are preparing to give an account of themselves to St. Peter and so are perhaps a little nervous. They are both looking their best but Harold is way ahead on the fashion and dapper stakes. Looking at Harold, Shane is now lamenting that he had not visited the dentist a little oftener. And they are chatting to each other, and they begin comparing notes about their very different but yet very creative and interesting lives. Shane has a folder under his arm filled with all the tributes and obituaries that were written about him when he died, he is boasting about the great funeral he had and all the celebrities that turned up at it, even the number of priests that came to concelebrate. He is telling Harold about how his family

even got out and danced in aisle at the funeral and Harold says well my family may not have danced in the aisle but they did do something that made me very proud (I cant tell ye about that as it hasn't happened yet) And then the conversation gets very competitive and Shane begins to pull out of his bag some of the many gold and platinum records that he has achieved for his music over the years. Not to be outdone Harold too has a bag full of cups, rosettes and medals he has won over many more years for flowers and vegetables and the very prestigious medal he was presented with on his 100th birthday, and then he has one medal that Shane certainly wont have, a bene Merenti medal from the pope. The best that Shane can say is that he once had a band called 'The Popes' (I understand they came after The Pogues) Shane is boasting that President Michael D came to his funeral but Harold fires back that Michael D invited him to the Aras not once but twice for tea to celebrate his 100th birthday last year and how the president thanked him for looking after the dahlias in the Aras. And because its Christmas week, Shane is going on about his Christmas Number One but Harold fires back that there was a time when there were more of Lawlors poinsettias in Irish homes than there were copies of Fairytale of New York. And on it goes...

But then the conversation stops when St. Peter jingles those famous keys and calls both of the boys up in their turn. However, when they meet St. Peter the question will be the same for both of them, and it wont be about, music or flowers or vegetables, how many celebrities or priests there were at your funeral or even how many medals or platinum records were won during your life. It will be something along the lines of the 'Were you faithful to your God and how did you treat the neighbours?'

How do ye think Harold will answer those questions? Well as far as God is concerned I'd say he and Harold were not strangers but rather great friends. And how did he treat the neighbours? Well, I'm sure there are many of you here today who could answer that question a lot better than I can. But judging by the pages of tributes on RIP.ie and the crowds that turned up in the last few days and again here today, I'd say he was fairly

ok where the neighbours are concerned. I'm not sure how Harold was on poetry but if I could put words into his mouth, I might encourage him to respond to St. Peter by reciting a very beautiful poem by Edgar Albert Guest. This is a poem that expresses the wish of the author to leave behind beautiful flowers for others to enjoy after they pass away.

The Gentle Gardener

*I'd like to leave but daffodils
to mark my little way,
To leave but tulips red and white
behind me as I stray;
I'd like to pass away from earth
and feel I'd left behind
But roses and forget-me-nots
for all who come to find.*

*I'd like to sow the barren spots
with all the flowers of earth,
To leave a path where those who come
should find but gentle mirth;
And when at last I'm called upon
to join the heavenly throng
I'd like to feel along my way
I'd left no sign of wrong.*

*And yet the cares are many
and the hours of toil are few;
There is not time enough on earth
for all I'd like to do;
But, having lived and having toiled,
I'd like the world to find
Some little touch of beauty
that my soul had left behind.*