

Kitty Campion RIP
Funeral Mass
Rathdowney Church
Monday 18th December 2023

Catherine (Kitty) Campion (nee Horgan), Conoboro Rd., Rathdowney, Co. Laois and formerly Knockavilla, Dundrum, Co. Tipperary, December 15th, 2023, peacefully, surrounded by her loving family, in her 82nd year, at Brookhaven Nursing Home, Ballyragget Co. Kilkenny. Predeceased by her husband Sylvie and brothers Willie and Ritchie. Sadly missed by her adoring family, Ves, John, Helen, Sue and Rick, son-in-law Ray, daughters-in-law Abi and Aishling, grandchildren, Lilli, Jessica, Nathan, Jade, Kirk, Danny, Shauna and Ryan, twin brother David, sisters Ita and Maureen, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, especially Mary, nieces, nephews, extended family, neighbours and a wide circle of friends.

Symbols: Cup **Shauna**, Racing Post Danny, Family picture **Ryan**, An LP **Jade**

First Reading: **Kirk** and Psalm

Second Reading: **Marion**

Prayers: **Marie, Teresa, Valerie, Joanne, Alan and Brian**

Offertory: **Maureen and Ita**

Having had the opportunity over the last few days to listen to some of you who knew Kitty as your mother, your grandmother, your neighbour and your friend, I have tried to reflect on this life of 82 years. As a family you chose that first reading today from the Book of Ecclesiastes reflecting the fact that in your mam's life there has been a time and a season for so many things. However, I just want to share a reflection on three of those things that were so important to Kitty the woman we honour with Christian burial today.

First of all, I was struck by the very important role Kitty's car played in her life. Somewhere in the recesses of my mind I recalled hearing a

poem written by someone who loved their car. Some of the lines from that poem are.....

The car is a modern wonder,
Designed for speed and style,
A sleek and shiny machine,
That can go the extra mile.

With the road ahead of us,
And the world at our feet,
We take the wheel of our destiny,
And our future, we eagerly greet.

For the car is more than just a machine,
It's a tool for our liberation,
A means of reaching our destination,
And living with joy and elation.

So let's embrace the car and all it represents,
Our freedom to roam and explore,
To move and groove to our heart's content,
And experience all that life has in store.

The car, our own personal space,
With all the comforts we desire,
A place where we can be ourselves,
And let our spirits aspire.

The sound system, our own personal DJ,
With music that fills our soul,
The road ahead, a new adventure,
As we take on the world whole.

The comfort of the open road,
Is something that we all need,
A place where we can find ourselves,
And from our troubles be freed.

I suspect that somewhere hidden among those lines of poetry are some of the reasons why Kitty Campion loved her car and what it represented for her..... *For the car is more than just a machine,
It's a tool for our liberation,*

*The car, our own personal space,
With all the comforts we desire,
A place where we can be ourselves,
And let our spirits aspire.*

*A place where we can find ourselves,
And from our troubles be freed.*

Kitty of course did not just love to drive her car for her own pleasure but also used it to help others. She picked up children from school, she brought people to work, to hospital appointments, to visit loved ones and so many other journeys. But just maybe I shouldn't say too much more about this because I don't want to get Kitty or myself into trouble with the Minister for Transport or the local branch of the Taxi Drivers Union.!

The Second thought I had about Kitty was that the thread that ran right though her life was the importance of family. There were three stages or experiences of family in Kitty's life. She was born into the Horgan family of Knockavilla, Dundrum Co. Tipperary on Saturday July 4th 1942. I think it is fair to say that despite living most of her adult life here in Co. Laois, Kitty remained a staunch Tipperary woman. The bond with her family of birth, The Horgans would also remain very strong to the end.

Sometime in the early 1960's Kitty by then working at McNamara's Chemist shop in Cashel would meet a charming young army man,

Sylvie Campion from Rathdowney Co. Laois. They met at a dance in The County Ballroom in Cashel. Like so many young Irish people at the time Sylvie and Kitty moved to England and began their married life in the London area. Thus began the second experience of Family for Kitty, the one she and Sylvie created together: *Ves, John, Helen, Sue and Rick*,. Ray, I think it was you who remarked the other day that Kitty was immensely proud of her children and she loved to talk of them. Those early years of married and family life in England were very happy ones for Sylvie and Kitty. In 1969 the call would come for them to return here to Rathdowney as Sylvie's father was not well and someone was needed to take over the family business in the Conoboro. 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.

Kitty and Sylvie were not just moving homes but they were also taking on responsibility for a business which had been in Sylvie's family for three previous generations. I can recall back ten years ago in 2013 when we had the service to celebrate Sylvie's life someone had directed me to a piece that Niall O'Doherty had written in a Rathdowney review about Campions shop. In one passage he wrote:

"Campions of the Conoboro was not just a place of business. It was the social centre of the eastern end of Rathdowney where neighbours met to discuss their joys and their sorrows, where school children get their sweets before they headed to the Tech, where many a poverty stricken family were saved."

I have no doubt that for Sylvie and Kitty, maintaining and continuing such an institution and tradition brought with it challenges as well as rewards. And this she had to do while also raising a young family.

The third phase of Kitty's experience of family was of course the arrival in more recent years of her eight grandchildren, *Lilli, Jessica, Nathan, Jade,*

Kirk, Danny, Shauna and Ryan, From all I have heard ye brought your granny so much joy and happiness. And I also know that there are many other children in this community that Kitty came into contact with and they simply called her Nanny Kitty

As we celebrate her life today, we particularly give thanks for Kitty, the daughter, the sister, the mother and grandmother.

My third reflection on Kitty's life is prompted by her love of music and particularly country and western. One of the verses from that poem about the love of cars read:

*The sound system, our own personal DJ,
With music that fills our soul,
The road ahead, a new adventure,
As we take on the world whole*

I understand that when you travelled with Kitty in her beloved car you needed to love the sound of Margo or Philomena Begley because they were also regular passengers singing at full volume from the dashboard. So, whether traveling in the car or at home in The Conoboro Kitty was surrounded by music. She was married to a man who could play the tin whistle, the Clarionet and the trumpet and it was a house that attracted musicians and singers at all hours of the day and night. But when it came to her own contribution Kitty had a favourite party piece and we heard it sung as Kitty was brought into the church today (will I think hear it later). It is a beautiful song sung by Porter Waigoner and others called *Fallen Leaves*.

One of the reasons so many people love Country songs is that they tell stories about real life. Many people also slag off country songs because the story they tell often tends to be sad. Kitty's song *Fallen Leaves* does not so much tell a story as provide some very sensible advice about how to live the best life possible. I hope I have the right lyrics here....

*Fallen leaves that lie scattered on the ground
The birds and flowers that were here now can't be found
All the friends that he once knew are not around
They are scattered like the leaves upon the ground*

*Some folks drift along through life and never thrill
To the feeling that a good deed brings until
It's too late and they are ready to lie down
There beneath the leaves that scattered on the ground*

*Lord let my eyes see every need of every man
Make me stop and always lend a helping hand
Then when I'm laid beneath that little grassy mound
There'll be more friends around than leaves upon the ground*

*To your grave there's no use taking any gold
You cannot use it when it's time for hands to fold
When you leave this earth for a better home someday
The only thing you'll take is what you gave away*

As a final thought today I would like to take that song *Fallen Leaves* and link it to the gospel we read earlier. Kitty has died in these December days when so much of our landscape is bare and barren. 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. Jesus picked up on that imagery from nature in today's gospel when he spoke of the grain of wheat falling on the ground, the seed being sown in the soil. The mystery of nature is that the with the wheat grain, like the fallen leaves, 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 Kitty'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.

The poet puts it more beautifully when he says:

Is there a leaf upon the tree

The Father does not see.

Leaves fall, so do we all

Return to earth, to sod.

Sparrows and Kings,

And all manner of things

Fall, fall into the hands

Of the living God.

Some weeks ago at another funeral here in this church a granddaughter read a beautiful poem for her grandmother The poem was called The Gentle Gardener by *Edgar Albert Guest*

The last few lines of that poem could so easily be Kitty'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.

Kitty, May your gentle soul rest in Peace AMEN