

Michael Harrison RIP
Funeral Service
Durrow Church
Saturday 9th December 2023

Peacefully after illness bravely borne with dignity and great humour. Predeceased by his wife Cathy.

Sadly mourned by his loving partner Edwina and all her family, his daughters Claire and Kathy, son John, son in law Ian, daughter in law

Thipyartat,(Tippyrat) grandson Jack, brothers Robert and Stephen, sister Claire, sisters in law, brothers in law, nieces, nephews, relatives and friends.

Homily

Recently I came across a very interesting reflection on the importance of our hands:

"Our hands tell who we are. They are believed to be perfect subjects of the mind. As physical labour shows in the callouses on our palms, so does gentleness (or greediness) or strength. Nothing else expresses human behaviour in so many ways. With our hands, we work, play, love, threaten, show joy or grief. Sensitive symbols of faith and friendship, our hands draw to us everything and everyone we love. Marvellously made and directed by the mind's eye, the mind's ear, and the heart's desire, our hands continually express our lives. What words cannot say, the hands can express with all tenderness and love.

Our hands tell who we are. As I reflected on my conversation with some of you who knew Michael best, I came away with the belief that his hands were key to so much of who he was. In his career as a vet, they were the hands that cared for all creatures great and small. They were the hands that could create, repair, dismantle always serving his many skillsets where he could become the electrician, the Plummer , the mechanic, the builder the craftsman in wood who built a tree house and a dolls house for his children at home in Kilfinnane . They were the hands, working in harmony with his brain and his feet that could excel

at rugby and the many other sports he loved. They were the hands that could skilfully guide a paint brush, guide a bicycle on a memorable trip with you Edwina along the wild Atlantic way, the hands that helped to guide a boat along the river Shannon on an equally memorable family holiday and when the boat got damaged they were the hands that could repair it and having it look like new before returning it to base. They were the hands too that could cook up a culinary masterpiece in the kitchen.

Sensitive symbols of faith and friendship, our hands draw to us everything and everyone we love.

I think it was Ian who remarked to me the other evening; 'Everyone loved Mike Harrison' As I listened to ye talk of Michael and then as I read down through the messages on RIP.ie I was reminded of an event I attended many years ago. The guest speaker was the then president of Ireland Mary McAleese. The president gave a short speech, but I never forgot it. She said that in her experience of life there were two types of people in the world: Radiators and Drains. Now we have all experienced the drains in our lives, those people who literally DRAIN us of every bit of energy because of their negativity and pessimism. We are very fortunate though if we also know the radiators, those people who radiate love and kindness, Calm, warmth and positivity. From everything I have learned about Michael, he was certainly one of the radiators.

The rich variety of symbols presented at the beginning of this service today found a strong echo in that Bible passage Claire read from the Book of Ecclesiastes "*There is a season for everything, for every occupation under heaven.*" Clearly the man we honour and celebrate here today lived a life which had a season for so many things. He was gifted in so many different ways.

But while these very powerful symbols up here tell us so much about the man, his giftedness and his achievements in life, perhaps the more profound symbols of Michael's life are you, the significant people in his life who gave him so much joy and love and which he returned to you in such abundance. I think of you whom Mike shared his professional life with and particularly the many young protégés that he mentored

through the years, the customers and clients he served and who valued his expertise. To you Robert , Stephen, and Claire, the family he was born into in Liverpool back in September 1951. Claire, you described him as *a very bright endearing little boy but very competitive, a daredevil who was mischievous but always full of fun*

When Michael went to University in Edinburgh he not only left with a degree in Veterinary Medicine but he had also met his future wife Cathy.

The fruit of their love was of course the three of you, their children Claire, Kathy and John. While the physical symbols presented here today reflect so much of Michael's giftedness and creativity, the three of you and what you have achieved in your own lives is by far the most powerful and potent symbol of Michael's achievements and no doubt that which gave him the greatest fulfilment and made him most proud. In my experience the only thing which parents delight in more than their own children is when grandchildren arrive, so I'm sure Jack, that as Michael's only grandchild you had a very special place in his heart.

After a short few years of Veterinary practice in the UK, Cathy and Michael moved to Ireland. They first worked in Buttevant Co. Cork and then to Kilfinnane in Co. Limerick. In all I believe Michael was in practice here in Ireland for 26 years. At the turn on the century Mike made a change in his career joining the Department of Agriculture as a Veterinary inspector. After an initial one year posting in Ballyjamesduff in Co. Cavan. Michael and Cathy moved here to the midlands when Michael's was appointed to Meat Factory in Rathdowney. They bought a house out in Ballagh in Errill and as a certain British Comedienne might say they chose that property because 'there was room for a pony' or even a few ponies.

The greatest sadness in Michael's life was to come when his wife Cathy died in 2014. No doubt that what helped him most during those difficult times was the support and love of his family and friends and the many interests he could turn to cope with his loss. But Michael was also to be lucky enough to find love in his life again. Edwina, as painful as these days are for you, you spoke very eloquently of the love you shared with this man whose life we honour and celebrate today. You

created many wonderful memories together over the last number of years not least that cycle adventure along the Wild Atlantic Way when as you said ye both realised there was more than just a good friendship between you. All our hearts and our sympathies go out to you today
Edwina.

I know that formal religion and faith did not play any big part in **Michael's** life. However there can be no doubt that the story of his life which has been characterised by kindness, gentleness, generosity, a capacity for friendship and the humility to wear his scholarly genius so lightly, all of these attributes and many more are exactly what God asks of us who seek to follow him. It is with that confidence that we commend **Michael** to love and compassion of God today.

I would like to finish with some lines taken from John O' Donohue's beautiful poem; *'On the death of a Beloved'*

"Though we need to weep your loss,
You dwell in that safe place in our hearts,
Where no storm or night or pain can reach you.....
Though we cannot see you with outward eyes,
We know our soul's gaze is upon your face,
Smiling back at us from within everything
To which we bring our best refinement.

Let us not look for you only in memory,
Where we would grow lonely without you.
You would want us to find you in presence,
Beside us when beauty brightens,
When kindness glows
And music echoes eternal tones.

When orchids brighten the earth,
Darkest winter has turned to spring;
May this dark grief flower with hope
In every heart that loves you.

So Michael

May you continue to inspire us:

To enter each day with a generous heart.

To serve the call of courage and love

Until we see your beautiful face again

In that land where there is no more separation,

Where all tears will be wiped from our mind,

And where we will never lose you again.

Michael . May your gentle soul rest in Peace

Service to celebrate the life of Michael Harrison

Holy Trinity Church, Durrow: Saturday 9 th December 2023

Picture of Michael – canvas will be provided by Edwina

Pallbearers (to escort Michael in and out of the Church)

© Edwina Farrell – Partner

© Claire and Katy Harrison – Daughters

© John Harrison – Son

Acknowledgement of family and friends who are watching the live stream links:

Kathleen and Edward Holland

Michael's brother Robert, sister-in-law Linda and family

Nicky and Sarah English and family

And all his other relatives and family who cannot be here today but who are watching from across

the world including Ireland, Scotland, England, Dubai, Australia, and New Zealand

Gifts

Jack Harrison (Michael's grandson) **Thai dictionary** – representing his life as a scholar including learning both Thai and Czech

Anita Nicol (Edwina's sister) **Piece of veterinary equipment** representing his career as a veterinary surgeon

Senan Farrell (Edwina's nephew) **Picture of Michael at the races** when horse Mireya won, ridden by his daughter Katy

Catherine Davidson (Michael's niece from Scotland)

Bicycle helmet representing his life as an adventurer – cycling, hiking, running, riding

Claire Maharg (Michael's sister) **Painting by Michael** representing his love of the arts, his talents as a painter and the art collection that he built up to enrich all of our homes

Martin Lawlor (Friend of the family) **Casserole pot** representing Michael's culinary talents and hospitality which so many were lucky enough to receive.

Evaan English (Michael's niece from Cork) **Irish rugby jersey** representing his love of sport (and how he hedged his bets with a stable of different sporting teams!!)

Daniel Harrison (Michael's nephew from England)

Wooden item that Dad made representing his work and many skillsets - electrician, plumber, builder, mechanic, carpenter and craftsman (made tables, dressers, dolls house and furniture, treehouses)

Jane Kennedy (Michael's sister-in-law) **Picture of Michael at his graduation from veterinary school**

Prayers of the Faithful

Mrs Lena Farrell (Edwina's Mum)

Michael fought the good fight, he finished the race, he kept the faith,
may he now receive from

Christ the crown of eternal Glory which He won for us with His death
and resurrection. **Lord hear us.**

John Harrison (Michael's son)

That God may visit Michael's family and friends with comfort and peace
especially his neighbours and those who cared for him. **Lord hear us.**

Marette Farrell (Edwina's sister)

We pray for Michael that God will reward him with peace and joy for
the goods he did during his life. **Lord hear us.**

Richard Kerr (Michael's step grandson)

Michael has finally reached the shore of eternity; now that all his earthly
tasks are completed, may he enjoy rest from all his labours. **Lord hear us.**

Music – Trish Carroll and James Rice

⊗ Opening – Nella Fantasia (Gabriel's Oboe)

⊗ Responsorial Psalm – Psalm 23

⊗ Reflective piece (after the Homily and Prayers of the Faithful) – TBC ?
Pachelbel's Canon

awaiting input from James

⊗ Blessing of the coffin – Jesus Remember Me

⊗ Exit piece – Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da (The Beatles)

Additional information on Michael's schooling and earlier life from his
sister, Claire:

