

Michael Walsh RIP
Funeral Mass
Rathdowney Church
Monday 25th September 2023

Michael Aidan Walsh, Glosa, Rathdowney, Co. Laois and formerly Garryduff, Errill, Co Laois, September 22nd. 2023, peacefully at home surrounded by his loving family. Predeceased by his parents Patrick and Lena and his brothers and sisters.

Deeply regretted by his heartbroken wife Anne, his adoring children Lizanne, Helena and Michael-John, grandchild Beth, brother Raymond, sisters-in-law, nieces, nephews, extended family, neighbours and a wide circle of friends.

Greet those who are joining us on the webcam, especially Helena's present and former colleagues from The European Parliament in Brussels and elsewhere

Readers: Helena and Eileen

Prayers: Alice, Aishling, Claire and Josephine

Bread and wine: Emma and Edward

Communion Reflection: MJ

I want to begin by sharing with you a reflection which I think is kind of appropriate for the man we honour with Christian burial today. It is simply called; 'CLOSE THE GATE'

*For this one farmer the worries are over, lie down and rest your head,
Your time has been and struggles enough, put the tractor in the shed.
Years were not always easy, some downright hard, but your faith in
God transcended,*

*Put away your tools and sleep in peace. The fences have all been
mended.*

*You raised a fine family, worked the land well and always followed the
Son of God,*

*Hang up your shovel inside of the barn; your work here on earth is
done.*

*A faith few possess led your journey through life, sometimes a jagged
and stony way,*

*The sun is setting, the cattle are all bedded, and here now is the end of
your day.*

*Your love of God's soil has passed on to your kin; the stories flow like
fine wine,*

*Wash off your work boots in the puddle left by blessed rain one final
time.*

*You always believed that the good Lord would provide and He always
has somehow,*

*Take off your gloves and put them down, no more sweat and worry
for you now.*

*Your labour is done, your home now is heaven; no more must you
wait,*

Your legacy lives on, your love of the land, and we will close the gate.

Nancy Kraayenhof

As we close the gate today on Michael Walsh's almost 96 years of earthly life we gather here to pray for the repose of his soul, we gather to commend Michael to the mercy and love of God whom he has remained faithful to all his life. We also gather to celebrate and give thanks for a life that has been lived well.

Michael was born on the 4th of November 1928 in Garryduff Errill. After his early education in Killadooley School Michael worked at home on the family farm in Garryduff. As we acknowledged at previous Walsh funerals, out in Garryduff, in addition to the love of farming, there was in the Walsh DNA an entrepreneurial gene which produced a family of shopkeepers. Michael was one of them. In his early thirties together with his brother Brendan, Michael went to Goresbridge in Co. Kilkenny to open what became a very successful grocery and supermarket business.

However it should possibly be noted that before Michael embarked on his adventure to Goresbridge he had been at a dance in Rathdowney and happened to meet a young local girl who had recently returned from Boarding School and was working in ?. While Michael continued with his plans to move to Goresbridge some little spark had been lit back in Rathdowney which would take a few more years to fan into a flame.

1975 was the year. Michael and Anne started going out together on St. Patrick's Day, They were engaged in June and they got married in October. Initially commuting between the shop in Goresbridge and the farm in Gloscha after some months Michael and Anne decided to settle on a life of exclusive farming and I don't think for Michael that was a difficult choice to make. From the earliest age Michael had a complete love of the land, farming and the animals, particularly cattle and sheep. He went on to expand and develop the farm in Gloscha. He had a wonderful relationship with Anne's parents and the arrival of Lizanne, Helena and Michael-John, would bring him a contentment and fulfilment in life which he cherished to his last breath in the early hours of Saturday morning.

I should also mention here that Michael had a wonderful hobby and interest in wood, working with wood and creating beautiful things from

wood including many items of furniture in his own home. He also made a beautiful rocking horse for his beloved grand daughter Beth. This love of working with wood was there from an early age but he was delighted to avail of the opportunity to go with some of his friends to night classes here in the Technical School now St. Fergal's to hone his skill.

It struck me that F's a G' were significant in Michael's life. The only three places he lived during his almost 96 years all began with G, Garryduff, Goresbridge and Glosa. There were also three very important F's in his life and we have mentioned two of them, Family and Farming. When speaking of the importance of family in Michael's life it was very much both the family he was born into, the Walsh's of Garryduff and the family he went on to create with Anne.

The third 'F' which was a main anchor of Michael's life was undoubtedly his FAITH. It was a faith I have no doubt that was nurtured at home in Garryduff but one that Michael brought with him into every stage and aspect of his life. It was a faith which was developed and deepened over the years through his devotion to St. Therese and Padre Pio. He visited both of their shrines at Lisieux and San Giovanni. Closer to home he climbed Croagh Patrick and did Lough Derg not as a tourist or for exercise but as a pilgrim. A faith nourished too by reading religious literature like the Messenger which he loved.

Over the last few years I've had the opportunity to visit Michael and Anne at home in Glosa every month to bring them Communion. I loved those visits. In some ways it reminded me of the times I had visited Liam and Cathleen out in Bealady a few years ago. It was also a scene reminiscent of the gospel I read today about the disciples at the supper in Emmaus. We sat at the table, we told stories, they would often relate something that was happening in your family lives, We had banter we prayed, we broke bread. Jesus was present. There was something very sacred about that simple ritual. It was also sacred because Michael and Anne brought to that encounter a lifelong journey of Faith which had been nurtured and nourished from their earliest days. It was a faith

which had sustained them in good times but most especially when the storms of life came their way. The other thing I remember about those visits to Gloscha was that Michael would always say to me with that big broad smile of his; 'You are welcome'

That greeting of Michael's reminded me of something familiar which I want to finish with today.

It is a reflection which over the years I have found to be comforting for many families as they say farewell to loved ones and which I hope you as a family can take some comfort today.

This church, where Michael came so often and was among other things a collector here, is today something of a departure lounge where we have gathered to pray with him as he takes his leave of us. I would like you to picture yourselves standing on a dock beside one of those great old-time sailing vessels. It's standing there, sails folded, waiting for the wind. Suddenly a breeze comes up. When the captain senses the breeze as a forerunner of the necessary wind, he quickly orders the sails to be let down and sure enough the wind comes, catches the sails full force, and carries the ship away from the dock where you are standing. Inevitably you or someone on that dock is bound to say, "Well there she goes"! And from our point of view it indeed does go. Soon the mighty ship, laden with it's crew and goods, is on the horizon, where the water and the sky meet and it looks like a speck before it disappears. It's still mighty and grand, still filled with life and goods, but it has left us. We are standing on the dock, quite alone. But, on the other side of the ocean, people are standing in anticipation, and as that speck on the horizon becomes larger, they begin to shout something different. They are crying with joy, not abandonment, "Here she comes!". And at the landing, there is welcome, joy, embracing and celebration.

We miss Michael, he is quickly receding from our sight. This funeral Mass and his burial later in the Local Cemetery down the road are our farewells, our version of "there she goes". But goes where? From our sight, from our community, from our care and love and friendship. How he will be missed. But he is not diminished, nor made poorer. We must remember in faith that "Here she comes" is the cry on the eternal shore

where Jesus, who understands the human heart is waiting. And there is Michael, now forever larger than life, filled with life and laughter and in the arms of the One who makes all things new again, the One who says, "Welcome Michael. Welcome Home"