

Peggy Donne Eulogy by brother Cahal Kennedy

I am Peggy's little brother. On behalf of the family I would like to thank you for joining us to offer this mass for Peggy. I must apologise to many of the congregation who can't join us due to the current health restrictions.

Peggy, or to give her her full title, Margaret Teresa was born in Ballykillduff, Co Donegal on 2nd October 1930, a small village about 2 miles from the beautiful sandy beach of Narin. She was the 4th of a family of 5. Although an idyllic place to live, life was hard. War was on; there was no work available, no secondary education except for the minority who could afford to pay. A small farm could not support a family of 7 so one by one my siblings left home to find work elsewhere.

Peggy left school at 14 and friends in Dublin offered her work at their B&B. It was really hard labour. After a long day cleaning and scrubbing she would, yet again, find she had lost her bed to another guest. She saved some money to get to Belfast and worked as a housekeeper for a doctor and his wife. Sadly she developed TB – a killer disease at the time. She spent 18 months in the sanatorium. At the time the drug streptomycin was not available so she had surgery to remove a lung. It was a lonely time separated from family and friends. Visits were few because of restrictions like now and the distance to travel. Thanks to her inner strength and the power of prayer she recovered slowly and when discharged she made her way home to Donegal where solid farm food and walks along the Atlantic Coast saw her slowly regain her strength. 2 years later she was on her travels again to Sussex where she found work, met Mick, the love of her life. My brother, my parish priest and I attended their wedding. They settled in Balcombe near to where Mick worked as an engineer on the construction of Gatwick Airport. At the time I was studying at St Mary's College Twickenham and spent many weekends with them. When work finished at Gatwick his German company sent him on his travels accompanied by Peggy. Mick's work took them to Manchester, Northern Ireland, Scotland, 3 years in Saudi Arabia, a few years in India and back to Manchester. Peggy in her own honest way had many tales to tell of the people, places and smells she met, liked and disliked. Undoubtedly the highlights of her travels was meeting and praying with Mother, now Saint Teresa of Calcutta.

After Mick's retirement they still had the travel bug and enjoyed regular holidays in the USA, Spain, Majorca and trips to nearly every capital in Europe. I was fortunate to have retired after 24 years teaching with the Army in Singapore and Germany and was able to be with Peggy during Mick's final illness and later to help her sell her lovely bungalow and move to Delamere Lodge which marked the beginning of a new, busy and happy period of her life. Her diary was always full and very difficult to get hold of her on the phone. Here in the comfort of her lovely new flat and surrounded by welcoming people she came alive again. But most important as her eyesight and mobility deteriorated she felt safe with Diane, lodge manager nearby for her. Happy in Delamere Peggy joined Marie and myself on trips to Donegal, Spain, Galway, Knock and Tenerife. She spent every Christmas with us after Mick's death and helped to make them lively, special occasions for the family. She loved people and especially children and made friends easily. Like all Irish people, she loved a bit of the craic – the Irish for a chance to chat, reminisce, tell a few stories and have a good singsong.

Last Christmas Peggy spent 3 weeks with us and was the life and soul of the party. My great-grandchildren loved her especially when she put me in my place. Always the day after her arrival in Corby I would take her to Tesco's to have her hair and nails done ready for Christmas Eve mass and get some essential shopping. By that I mean wine, red wine – not any old wine but the quality she and Georgina enjoyed. Unfortunately for the manager of the wine department, on one occasion she couldn't find what she wanted and suggested ways in which his store should and could be improved.

Peggy's decision to engage Georgina as her carer was an inspired move. For the past years since Mick died Georgina has not just been her carer but a very dear friend and confident. During Peggy's recent illness family were not allowed to visit her but Georgina was with her right till the end to bring her comfort and special gifts like chocolate and her favourite liquid in a bottle. Georgina with the help of my granddaughter Niamh did most of the organising of the funeral. Thank you Georgina for caring with a capital c and for your love and I have to say it... patience! Peggy was looking forward to staying with me in my new bungalow in September and we had planned a trip back to Donegal and Knock. Sadly, her long period in isolation and health problems took their toll.

Peggy loved life and enjoyed it to the full and did not fear death. She had a strong faith and belief which sustained her during the last few difficult years. With the help of the parishioners she came regularly to mass at St Joseph's where she got strength and comfort. She had a strong devotion to Our Lady of Knock where she and Mick often prayed and she had her nightly Rosary.

Even as her sight failed, and she suffered severe back ache and had difficulty walking, she seldom complained. Her secret – well sitting one night before she left us at Christmas, sipping another glass of wine and talking about changes in both our lives, she said, well thank God that this awful world is not our home. We are on a journey – just passing through to where there is a better life and home waiting for us. Peggy was certainly ready to go on that final journey to her other home and life – eternal life with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And so my big sister, until please God, when we meet again as a family, rest in peace my love. Slan agus beanacht.