

We come together today for the funeral of Barbara Sargent, of one who was so much part of the life of this Parish and this community. Where do we begin? Barbara was Barbara, full of life, full of energy, always ready to give of herself whether in the context of a big project or in just standing alongside someone.

Her death, in the early hours of Thursday morning, after a battle fiercely fought in the ICU of Beaumont Hospital, has come as a dreadful blow to Gerry and the family and a huge shock to the Parish and the wider community to which Barbara contributed so much.

She was very proud of her roots in this area in which she and Hazel grew up. She loved the outdoors, quickly becoming involved in tennis and sailing. I am sure she was noticed by a number of people, but one particular bank official remembers seeing her board the bus for school as he travelled into work. She met the same Gerry Sargent at National Sailing Championships in Skerries in 1962. So began the love of a lifetime. Her family were not quite sure; so, as Gerry remarks ‘she was sent off to Coventry, sorry London’ for a year to see if things would cool. But even in those days, Barbara was a lady who knew her own mind and she and Gerry were married. Not long afterwards David and Robert were born, soon to be followed by Andy. Newly wed, three young children, Gerry and Barbara worked hard to establish a home for themselves and their children on the Strand Road in Sutton. Barbara and Gerry rejoiced in their children, in watching them grow up, in all that they have achieved, in the partners they found, in watching the grandchildren develop. And they clearly took an obvious interest in her. Along with Hazel, she offered loving care and support for her mother Peggy for so many years.

Very much the wife and mother, Barbara lived a very full and active life outside the home. She loved her sailing and her membership of Howth Yacht Club. She got great enjoyment out of the boat she and Gerry kept in the Marina, whether it be the longer trips or just heading out around Ireland's Eye or Lambay. She was of course fiercely competitive, an active member of the crew of 'Tough Nut' for nigh on twenty years. Even the name of that boat seems to say something about her. Only the other day, I heard her described as the 'Mother Hen' of 'Tough Nut'. That title brings out another aspect of the life of Barbara that we remember with thanksgiving today, which will strike a particular chord with a lot of you who have gathered here today. Barbara was very much a people person, a loyal friend, a compassionate person – a compassion that worked itself out in very practical ways, 'Are you on your own? Come around for a meal'. 'Are you doing anything today – we're heading out on the boat; come and join us.' Then the simple gift of presence, the gift of time – I heard only the other day, 'You know, when I was sick; Barbara was around with me every day for a week.'

Today this Parish remembers with deep gratitude one who was very much part of every aspect of the life of this place. She held a very sincere, very practical faith. She was not interested in abstract theological argument but in the difference our faith made in day to day living. Worship, regular participation in worship was very much part of her make up – though she would tell me with that lovely disarming grin 'You won't see a lot of us when the autumn series is on.' She will be deeply missed. She will be missed in the choir, around the time of the Fete, in the Bridge Club, missed when there were just jobs to be

done, Barbara would be there, full of energy and practical, down to earth common sense. She was very much instrumental in the establishment of the Tuesday afternoon social group, sensing a need for people to just come together.

You will come with your own particular memories of Barbara as wife, as mother and grandmother, as sister, as friend. In the silence let us just thank God for Barbara and the ways in which she has touched and enriched our lives.

Whatever the loss we feel, we can only imagine the loss that is felt by her beloved Gerry, by her children David, Robert and Andy and their families and her sister Hazel. So we as a wider community gather around you today to offer you our love and support and to assure you of our continuing love and prayers in the days that lie ahead as you build a life without your beloved 'Bar'.

We come to set the mystery of death in the context of our Christian faith. We are in the season of Advent, getting ready for Christmas, the feast of the Incarnation, Emmanuel, God among us in the person of Jesus Christ. Barbara loved this time of the Church year, the Carol Service and the craic afterwards, the Family Service, the singing of the Messiah and all that went with this time of the year. Soon we will hear those lovely words from St John's Gospel:-

⁴What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

A light has gone out – that impish grin, that compassionate presence, that energy. But the light shines on in our hearts. Our love for her, her love for us lives on. But more than that, in the face of death we affirm life; life for ourselves, life for Barbara in the closer presence of the God she served and worshipped here in so many ways; as in sure and certain hope we commend her to the loving and eternal care of her heavenly Father.

I will close with a prayer that brings home to me the hope that we have in Christ for ourselves and for those who have gone before us in the faith.

We give them back to thee, dear Lord, who gavest them to us. Yet as thou didst not lose them in giving, so we have not lost them by their return. What thou gavest thou takest not away, O Lover of souls; for what is thine is ours also if we are thine. And life is eternal and love is immortal, and death is only an horizon, and an horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight. Lift us up, strong Son of God, that we may see further; cleanse our eyes that we may see more clearly; and draw us closer to thyself that we may know ourselves to be nearer to our loved ones who are with thee. And while thou dost prepare for us, prepare us also for that happy place, that where they are and thou art, we too may be for evermore.

Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.