

A former Rector of Mountmellick and Dean of Kildare, the late Dean Alfred Buchanan, speaking of records held by Parishes, said they spoke of events, of births, marriages, deaths, the number attending services and who preached, the minutes of Vestry meetings and Parish Accounts. They said nothing of the number of people who slipped quietly into Church, who said their prayers, shared their hopes, fears, regrets, sadness, joy with God and slipped quietly home.

The Dean could almost have been speaking of Dudley Macaulay. Dudley slipped quietly into Church usually at the 9:30 service, would have sat near the back against the far wall and would have slipped quietly away at the end of the Service after a brief chat at the door.

I first came across Dudley in the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast at the bedside of his beloved wife Jennifer not long before she died. They had taken a brief trip up North when Jennifer was taken seriously ill. I was struck at the time by the obvious devotion that Dudley had for Jennifer and the close family bonds that flowed from that – they really were a love match and in truth I don't think Dudley ever fully recovered from the loss of Jennifer.

He had grown up in Rathfarnham with his two brothers Donald and Kenneth and the family also maintained a summer house in Donnabate. He went to school in Fettes College in Edinburgh. He held very happy memories of his time in Fettes and would have returned regularly for re-unions. From there he came back to Trinity to study engineering, followed by a graduate apprenticeship with BICC in England. He returned to Dublin to work in Maguire and Paterson followed by a very happy period in Eolas (the old IIRS). He was very much the engineer, applying his skills not only at work but also in projects to improve the home. He always carried a measuring tape – you never know when an engineer might need one – and this he takes to the grave.

The focus of his life was Jennifer. They shared 30 years together, building a home, rearing their two sons Mark and Iain. Together they travelled, they enjoyed the garden, enjoyed each other's company.

His love of travel has continued over the past five years, travelling to all parts of the world. When away he always enjoyed exploring his environment – even enjoying a Scotch on top of a glacier with ice hacked off the glacier by the helicopter pilot. He enjoyed regular trips to South Africa to visit his life long friend Archie Richards and his wife Pearl. Indeed today he was to have set off for Singapore to return on the Queen Mary. Well read, well informed on all manner of topics and was a mine of good advice much valued by Mark and Iain.

So today we remember, we give thanks for the life of Dudley Macaulay, as devoted husband, father and grandfather and brother. The suddenness of his death has caught everyone off balance. It sharpens the sense of loss and heightens the awareness of our own mortality. Today those of us outside the family circle gather here today to support you with our presence, our love and our prayers. On an occasion such as this words seem so inadequate to express our sympathy and our love. Today, amidst the turmoil of emotions may you feel the love and the presence of those who have come to be with you today.

Outside in the grounds of the Church you can see the signs of spring, of plants coming back into life, of new life shooting up from the earth, from the stems and branches of bare bushes and trees. Something of this I think came to the mind of Paul as he wrote words of reassurance to the Christians in Corinth:

³⁵ But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" ³⁶ Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body

that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain.

³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.

⁴² So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.

As they worked in their garden together, Dudley and Jennifer will have known the lesson of the seed. The seed, seemingly so insignificant, so vulnerable, contains within it all the potential of the magnificent plant. But before that can happen we have to let go of the seed, bury it in the earth.

Dudley's family are having to let go. It is our hope and prayer and trust that the one we have let go has entered into that fuller life that God has prepared for us all, where there is no more sorrow, no more separation from those who have gone before – only peace in the closer presence of God..

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.