

On Wednesday of last week, Rosemary Latimer was full of life. Talking as she did each day to her sister Hazel; talking of books she had read and life in general. Then on Thursday she died very suddenly in her home in Verbena, Sydney, her companion of over fifty years close at hand.

Sudden death knocks us all off balance as we come to terms with the loss of one dear to us. Hazel has lost a beloved sister, Sydney has lost a companion and lifelong friend, her wider family have lost an adoring Aunt, their beloved Dodie.

So, on this the day of her funeral, we come before God with the whole swirl of emotions that we have at this time, to remember one who has meant so much to us down through the years, to thank God for all that Rosemary has meant to us, to ask for his comfort and support in the days that lie ahead. As Christians, we set Rosemary's life and death in the context of our faith as we entrust her to the loving care of her heavenly Father.

Rosemary was Howth from the day of her birth in 1933 and so was a lifelong member of this Parish. She was very much a member of the Church of Ireland and loved its traditions of worship and would have been very comfortable in the low Church tradition. Regular in worship, she contributed to the life and worship of this place, serving as Secretary of Select Vestry and singing in the choir. She enjoyed the fellowship of this place and was an enthusiastic member of the Tuesday Social Group. I remember her as a quiet reserved person and utterly sincere.

She excelled at school, winning a scholarship to Bertrand and Russell, achieving top marks in Ireland in French at Inter Cert. She worked in Royal Insurance all her working life, ending up as PA to the General Manager. On retirement, she worked as a volunteer in the Oxfam shop in Malahide and took extramural classes in literature. She was an avid reader and really enjoyed her book club.

She was very much a family person, enjoying a close relationship with her sister Hazel and her nieces Dorothy and Joy and their families. In Sydney she found a lifelong friend and companion. Rosemary, Hazel and Sydney enjoyed holidays in Irish lighthouses and enjoyed the simple pleasures of a nice meal, a glass of wine, the TV and just simple craic.

In her absence there is the shock of the suddenness of her death, the gap in our lives that no-one else can fill in quite the same way. As you begin to build a life without Rosemary you can be assured of the love and prayers of wider family, of friends, of this Parish. May the memories of love, of companionship, of her many gifts and talents soften the very real sorrow and loss that you feel at this time.

We set our loss in the context of our faith, of the faith in which Rosemary lived and died. You have chosen two passages for her funeral service from St Matthew's Gospel. The first, from the opening section of the Sermon on the Mount, speaks of those fundamental Christian values of faith, of integrity, of justice that we are called to model in our daily life. The second, with its reflection on where true riches are to be found, not on the outward trappings of

life but on the inner convictions of faith. I spoke earlier of Rosemary very much at ease in the low Church tradition of the Church of Ireland, in simplicity of worship; of her enjoying the simple pleasures of gathering around the table for a meal, settling down in front of the TV, of simple honest craic. Rosemary and her generation have much to teach us in the value of simplicity of life, simplicity of faith and in that finding a fundamental peace with ourselves, with God and with one another.

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.