

It is now a month since we gathered in the Chapel at Glasnevin for Jenny's funeral. On that day Fred and her son Karl lit a candle and placed it on Jenny's coffin. It was, I said at the time, a sign of light and hope and peace.

In those dark distressing days the family probably did not feel much light or hope or peace as the awful reality of Jenny's sudden tragic death struck home. As I remarked that day, it is important that the memories of those tragic events would not be allowed to tell the whole story of Jenny Newell as mother, as daughter, as sister, as friend.

We are about to celebrate of Christmas. On Christmas Eve, at the mid night service, we will read those lovely words of John's Gospel:

⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

So tonight with greater confidence and assurance we once more light a candle. For the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. In the month since Jenny's funeral we have had the opportunity afforded by the last few weeks to take a longer look at our memories of Jenny. As Fred and Jean and Karl have looked over the photos they have remembered Jenny as one who loved travel – so many of the photos are of different spots around the world. I think it is no surprise that she loved her job working with Aran Air. She loved music (she hardly would have licked that one up off the ground) and dance. As a youngster she loved animals, particularly horses. Then as we look

a the photos of her and Karl, who she loved to bits, we remember a loving mother.

The family have been deeply touched by the huge number of letters, cards, mass cards that have come in. I am sure folk will understand if they cannot reply to each one individually. Some of course have come from their own friends but many have come from people they have never heard of but who knew and loved Jenny; those she worked with in Aran Air, those she had met through AWARE and many others; who just wanted the family to know that though they did not know them they shared something of the pain of their loss. They have taken great comfort from this assurance that their beloved Jenny was special to many other people.

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not overcome it.

This service, coming as I say a month after Jenny's funeral and just a week short of Christmas, gives us an opportunity to hear afresh the words of hope, of life, of peace; a chance to hear them with maybe greater assurance and confidence in the God we meet in Christ, whose birth we prepare to celebrate. This Service also comes a few days before the shortest day, the longest night, of the year. It is at this time of year that the rising sun illuminates the very heart of the burial chamber at the ancient passage grave at Newgrange. A sign that the lowest point has come, spring is on its way with its promise of new life, new growth. The light of Christ shines right into the heart of our deepest darkness. As we heard in those lovely words we heard from Paul in his letter to

the Romans, death does not, never has, never will have the final word, in Christ, in us, in Jenny.

I am persuaded that neither death, nor life,
nor angels, nor principalities,
nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,
nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8: 38,39

Nothing will be able to separate us.

On Christmas Day, at the end of each of our services, the blessing is introduced with the words:

Christ, who by his incarnation gathered into one all things earthly and heavenly, fill you with his joy and peace.

Our abiding hope for Jenny herself is peace – no more despair, no more pain, no more emptiness but peace, a warm and luxuriant peace in the welcoming present of a loving and merciful God..

Let us hear afresh the promise of Christ himself as we entrust ourselves and Jenny to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. *John 14:27*