

Last week end Paul Kavanagh (PK to his friends) had travelled North with his son Max for a sailing event. It was a trip that was to end in his sudden death leaving his family and his friends shocked and saddened. Paul had grown up in Finglas. He had set up his own business, Apollo Blinds, and in time had come to live on the Dublin Road in Sutton. Here he and Jill raised their two lads Alex and Max. His own family moved to Australia but Paul chose to stay here, maintaining close contacts over the years. The family speak of PK's three great passions in life; sailing, which he took to in his 20's, rugby and the lads. As the large attendance here today bears witness his interest in sailing and rugby was more than just a passing interest. He threw himself into the organisation, making things better for the whole membership. He was proud of both his sons, Alex and Max and took great pride in watching them grow up and develop their own skills and talents. Members of the family will be sharing their own particular memories of PK.

His death in Northern Ireland last Sunday struck everyone out of the blue. It was all so sudden. That suddenness can catch us all off balance. There are no chances for goodbyes; it sharpens our awareness of loss; something in us still cannot believe this has happened. A funeral, a memorial service provides us with an occasion to reflect. As part of our preparation of ourselves for this service, we look back and realise how much our lives were intertwined not only in the big things but the simple things of sharing meals, watching the rugby, the sailing, the lift to school in the morning, just being in each other's company, the simple conversations in which advice was given, in which thoughts were shared. We thank God for all that PK has meant to us and will continue to mean to us.

Those of us outside the immediate family circle have come here today to show our love and our sympathy to those who will miss PK most. We think particularly of Jill, their sons Alex and Max as well as Paul's brothers, John

and David, and his sister, Betty and their families. We offer them our love and our sympathy not just today but for the months to come as they come to terms with life without Paul.

Any death, but particularly a sudden death, is a reminder to us all that life is precious, life is a gift; we are reminded of the importance of taking the opportunities it offers, opportunities to express love, of not taking each other for granted, of making use of the opportunities that life brings our way. It is a reminder in short of our own mortality.

We come to set the mystery of death in the context of our Christian faith. I begin with Easter, with life triumphant over death that lies at the heart of our faith, that we celebrate in the Eucharist Sunday by Sunday. In our Gospel reading, Jesus, speaking to the disciples on the eve of his Passion, talks of separation. Separation, bereavement, is always difficult, always painful. There is a finality that I spoke of earlier – the suddenness is final, it is unfair and it hurts. Into all that Jesus speaks words of comfort, words of hope

Do not let your hearts be troubled: trust in God, trust also in me
..... that where I am, there you may also be ²⁷Peace I leave
with you, my peace I give you. I do not give as the world gives. Let
not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid

These are not thoughts that come naturally to us at a time such as this when our hearts are hurting. So we the friends, the school friends the colleagues, the wider family gather round in love and support, listening to the hurt, the sadness and the loss so that in our faltering words, our simple presence, something of Christ's love may be known.

In all this, as the Gospels unfold the story of Jesus I am reminded that we follow a Lord who knows what death, what suffering, what loss is all about; one who knew what it was like to weep and the grave of his friend Lazarus. Not only that, he is the one who was raised triumphant over death, breaking the

power of death itself. Knowing in his own person what it was all about, I find in him one to whom I can come in my own time of suffering and find real comfort, real strength and real hope.

On this day, as we have come to thank God for the life of Paul, of PK Kavanagh and the love we have shared with him, we have come also to offer our love and support to those who will miss her most. May you, the family and friends of Paul Kavanagh know something of the presence of Christ in these coming days and in his presence come to know something of his peace

Thinking of PK's love of sailing I will close with this parable of immortality:

I am standing by the seashore.

A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze
and starts for the blue ocean.

She is an object of beauty and strength,
and I stand and watch

until at last she hangs like a speck of white cloud
just where the sun and sky come down to mingle with each other.

Then someone at my side says, 'There she goes!'

Gone where? Gone from my sight - that is all.

She is just as large in mast and hull and spar
as she was when she left my side
and just as able to bear her load of living freight
to the places of destination.

Her diminished size is in me, not in her.

And just at the moment when someone at my side says,

'There she goes!'

there are other eyes watching her coming,

and other voices ready to take up the glad shout :

'Here she comes!'