

Yesterday afternoon, in the Victorian Chapel in Mount Jerome, the family of Jennifer Guinness Booth gathered for the funeral service of Jennifer, a beloved mother, grand mother, wife and dear friend who had died last Saturday morning surrounded by those she loved at the end of a dogged battle with cancer. That service was personal, it was private space for a family coming to terms with their loss.

Today, you the family of Jennifer are joined by many friends and associates, representatives of groups with whom Jennifer was associated in sailing, in victim support, in CRC.

Born in England, she had married John Guinness. He himself had been educated in England, had trained as a Naval officer and returned to Ireland to take his place in the banking world. They lived in Censure House here on the peninsula and it is here that they reared their three children Ian, Gillian and Tania. John died in a climbing accident in 1988. Then after several years as a widow, Alex Booth came into her life, introduced by mutual friends with Alex eventually moving over the Ireland on retirement. A shared life that was to culminate in a lovely wedding here in St Mary's just before Christmas.

Her daughter Gillian has shared with us memories of the family, memories of a mother, of a dear friend and of all that Jennifer stood for.. Clayton, a long standing friend of the family will share his memories of Jennifer as a mariner in her own right, achieving recognition locally, nationally and internationally. Like her family, many of you who have come here today for her memorial

service will have very particular memories of Jennifer and how she touched your lives.

Jennifer of course came to world attention when she was kidnapped and held for ransom. At that time she demonstrated calmness, resilience, a determination that was remarked upon by the security forces involved in securing her release. What is not so well known is what followed on from that. She was instrumental in the establishment of Victim Support, a group enabling those who have been victims to have their voice heard. Last year, purely by chance, I happened to meet a lady on holiday from Northern Ireland. On hearing that I was from Howth, she asked ‘Do you know Jennifer Guinness?’ She then went on to tell of her own experience of kidnap. On her release she contacted Jennifer and was forever grateful for her listening ear, a sympathy that came from her own experience of kidnap, which enabled this lady to move on from what had happened to her.

Jennifer had not been well for some time. She brought to the way she dealt with her illness something of her resilience and determination that she brought to other areas of her life. As we recalled yesterday evening in Mount Jerome, last December, as we gathered in St Mary’s for that lovely wedding, we all knew, Jennifer knew that it would not be long before we were here. I found that wedding, and the celebration in the house afterwards, a lovely life affirming event. As we came to the vows, I quietly asked Jennifer would she like to remain seated. “No thank you – I’ll stand.” Then of course after Christmas, Jennifer announced that she wanted to go down to Ballymaloo, for a ‘mini-moon’ quietly declaring that she was not going to sit around waiting to

die.. There is a verse that runs, ‘In the midst of life we are in death’. I often like to reverse that and declare ‘In the midst of death, we are in life.’

Today we all gather not only to thank God for the life of Jennifer Guinness Booth and all that was good and true in her life. We also come to offer our love and support to those who will miss her most. We think of her children Ian, Gillian and Tania and their families. We think of Alex who has been at her side all these years, right through her final battle. We assure you all of our love and our prayers not just for today but in all that lies ahead for you all.

Remember I said, ‘In the midst of death we are in life.’ Because another thing we are doing this afternoon is, in the face of death, affirming our own Christian faith, that death is not the end, death has not had the final say. We have just read as our reading for this service that lovely passage from the Book Revelation. This comes at the end of possibly one of the strangest books of the Bible with its images of heavenly turmoil, of conflict between forces of good and evil. At the end there is this image of the new Jerusalem, an image of peace, of healing in the presence of Almighty God. That is our hope and prayer for Jennifer this day. The battle with sickness, with darkness, with weakness is past. Our hope for her is peace in the closer presence of God.

and God himself will be with them;  
    <sup>4</sup> he will wipe every tear from their eyes.  
Death will be no more;  
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,  
for the first things have passed away."

As we recall her prowess on the seas, I will just close with a Parable of immortality that was read for us in Mount Jerome yesterday afternoon

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!’