

Marjory Orr was born in Belfast in 1924 – she died suddenly in her home in Howth last Thursday night. She had grown up in the parish of St Mark's, Dundela on the road out to Bangor and Hollywood. She went to University at Queen's University in Belfast, studying German, French and history. She taught for a while but it was not really for her. Though she maintained her love of languages. She married John Louis Johnston in 1948 and Louis' business brought them to Dublin. She and Louis set up home here in Howth and here they reared their son's Mark and Simon. The family became very much part of the community and this parish. In all those years she never lost that gentle Belfast accent. There was another trait to Marjory that is summed up by a lovely Northern Ireland expression. It is used of someone's attitude in the face of adversity, when you might say that 'they tholled it'. It speaks of a calmness, a serenity in the face of adversity. Marjory, in the course of a long and gracious life, knew her share of adversity. At the age of 18 she helped nurse her grandmother through cancer. She knew the loss of her son Simon as well as her husband. As her son Mark said the other night, 'She tholled it'. She offered wonderful support to Simon's wife, Mary, and the children and they in turn have been a great source of delight to her. She would speak with great pride of Mark as an architect and loved visiting him in Italy and their school of yoga. She was one of that dying breed of letter writers, keeping up a regular correspondence with her brother Noel in Canada and the family in Australia.

She was fiercely independent – in reply to one neighbour's concern at her climbing a ladder to paint the outside of the house – 'I'll do it myself as long as I can.' Only in very recent years did she decide to get in outside help for the garden – and as for persuading her that it was not necessary to kneel for communion. In St Mary's we will remember a faithful member of the Parish, regular in her attendance at worship, always ready to play a part when help was needed with Church flowers, with the tidying up of Church grounds.

She kept herself active in mind and body. She was a voracious reader. Digital camera were no bother to her, using hers to photograph that lovely pheasant that wanders the grounds.. She had a love of nature and, as Mark remarked, the garden was a great solace to her. in the business of weeding, planting, pruning she felt at oen with nature and her God.

I come back to that word serenity. Marjory was a lady who was at peace with herself, at peace with God, one whose gentle smile radiated that peace to those around her. Her Bible (the Authorised Version of course) was at her side, with a number of favourite prayers, including the one with which we will conclude this service, tucked inside.

A wonderful lady – we gather here to thank God for all that we have received in and through her. But of course however thankful we are, however strong our faith, the loss of a loved one, one who has been so much part of our life, there is still a very proper sense of loss, of sadness. So today we extend our love and sympathy to Mark and Gabriella, to Mary and James, Alexander, Caroline and Simon, to her brother Noel and Jean in Canada along with the family in Australia. May God grant to you something of Marjory's serenity at this time.

Of course Easter is just around the corner and in former years Marjory would have been here decorating the Church. It is a festival of the victory of life over death, of resurrection. Before we finish, I just want to bring together these them of resurrection hope and Marjory's love of nature, of the garden.

Outside in the grounds of the Church, where Marjory gave so freely of her time in years past, 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:

<sup>35</sup> But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" <sup>36</sup> Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. <sup>37</sup> 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. <sup>38</sup> But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.

<sup>42</sup> So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. <sup>43</sup> It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. <sup>44</sup> It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. *1 Cor 15*

As she worked in her garden, Marjory will have understood the lesson of the seed. As it turns out the last picture taken of her, over the Mothering Sunday weekend was of Marjorie sowing seeds. 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., before the full potential of the seed can be realised

In our Gospel reading last Sunday, Jesus spoke of this same process of seed, of planting, of letting go.

<sup>24</sup>Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

<sup>25</sup>Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. *John 12:24,25*

It is in this process of losing and finding, of letting go that we find our true selves.

Marjorie'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.