

I will always remember my first meeting with Mrs Pat Jessop. I had called at her house not long after my arrival in the Parish of Howth. I introduced myself and was invited in with the warning ‘You are very welcome – but please don’t talk about religion.’ Duly warned, I went in and over a series of visits discovered a remarkable lady, with a wide range of interests and a huge interest in people – despite the warning, she would almost always ask how things were going in the Parish and would have been supportive of the Parish.

She loved the Sutton/Howth area in which she lived all her life. She met and married Dr Alfred Jessop. She moved just a few doors up the road to the home they established for themselves and in which they brought up their children Ann, Michael and Gay. She helped him in his General Practice in Sutton until he was appointed Consultant Anaesthetist. I recall her telling me at that time she found herself with time on her hands. ‘I did something which consultants’ wives didn’t do in those days – I went to cook in a convent.’ The convent in question was involved in social work and it was Pat Jessop’s way of showing very practical help. Of course she always did enjoy not doing everything that was expected of her. At age 18 she scandalised the local tennis club by playing in bare feet. She was a wonderful warm human being, the family have fond memories of her as mother and doctor’s wife. The very practical concern that took the consultant’s wife to cook in a convent kitchen also led her to help establish Riding for the Disabled in this area. Always very hospitable, the family remember the Sunday afternoon tennis parties that were so much a part of their growing up.

Then of course there was the garden that gave her so much pleasure. You can still see the traces of the vegetable beds that occupied the front garden of the house. She enjoyed the garden and still on a much reduced scale enjoyed growing things at the back of the house, even encouraging me to try different things.

Very much the family person, photos of the family decorated the sitting room in the back of the house and she would frequently talk of them and what they had achieved. She was grateful for the fact that she was able to stay in her own house right up to the day she died and always spoke very warmly of the carers that made this possible.

She was also a person who did not like unnecessary fuss – so a quiet service here is in keeping with her and her outlook of life. Today we gather to give thanks to God for a remarkable lady who has touched so many lives, a lady who has amused us, who has comforted us, has strengthened us and loved us and we commend her to the loving care of Almighty God.

In the grounds outside 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 that we have just read from:

<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.

As she worked in the garden Pat Jessop will have known the lesson of the seed. 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.

Last Sunday, on Mothering Sunday Pat Jessop died quietly, with no fuss, in the Mater Hospital. You, the family have had to let her 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.