

OBITUARY

Laurence (Larry) O'Toole, 1929 to 2011

Enriched by his enormous legacy of love and gentleness

ON Friday, 15th July the communities of Ardclough, Celbridge, Clane, Prosperous and Straffan were deeply saddened by the news that Laurence (Larry) O'Toole had passed away.

Born in the city of Dublin of 22nd January 1929, a few days later he was abandoned at a church, presumably it was St Teresa's Donore Avenue where he was baptised on 31st January 1929.

He was given the name of Laurence O'Toole, a notable Irish saint and martyr. Despite great efforts by many people, including the late Fr Philip Newman, he never succeeded in tracing his parents. This was a cause of great sadness to him throughout his long life.

Sometime later he was taken to Artane Boys' School where he remained until released at the tender age of 16.

During his time there he endured great physical punishment and deprivation which resulted in him having to spend a great deal of time in hospital recovering from the horrendous injuries sustained.

He was forced to work on the school farm and on leaving he was a skilled, if somewhat, aggrieved worker.

He spent a number of years at various farms throughout the country where, with one notable exception, he was treated very badly.

He was forced to sleep in hay barns and farm sheds and worked long hours seven days a week for little or no pay and with just sufficient food to sustain him.

The one exception Larry spoke about was the Ryan family in Puckane, Nenagh, County Tipperary where he spent a few happy years.

His face would light up as he recalled how he was treated as a member of the Ryan family and brought to dances, hurling matches and other social functions in the locality.

Larry joined the staff of Kildare County Council in May 1979 and retired in October 1996.

Prior to moving to Celbridge, Larry resided at various locations in Ardclough, Clane, Prosperous and Straffan.



The late Larry O'Toole

bridge, Larry walked to Glen Ashling Nursing Home to serve mass celebrated by the late Fr Philip Newman, Fr Greene, Fr Innocent and Fr Douglas.

On the few occasions that a priest was not available, he distributed Holy Communion and recited the Rosary for the grateful residents.

Despite his tortuous childhood and some very difficult adult years, Larry never bore a grudge against those who abused him. In fact he often prayed God's forgiveness for them despite all he had endured.

During his working life in Celbridge, Larry was responsible for cleaning the Main Street. To many this was a less than glamorous task but his dedication and friendly disposition were greatly appreciated by the community.

His outgoing personality and ready beaming smile assured him of celebrity status where ever he went.

The people of Celbridge responded to his wonderful nature with cups of tea and biscuits during his working day. Needless to say they were all accepted gratefully and consumed with relish.

He extended a warm handshake to all and sundry. He always had a special greeting for the children who ran to him to clasp his outstretched hand and pet his three legged dog Rambo.

Six years ago, Larry left his home in St Patrick's Park and moved into a lovely apartment in Hawthorn Court where he made many new friends.

On Sunday, 17th July a beautiful Requiem Mass was celebrated by Fr Pat Egan,

During this time, he was 'adopted' by a number of families who cherished him as one of their own.

Indeed this was very much the case when he came to live in Celbridge. He spoke glowingly about all these families and was full of praise and gratitude for everything they did for him. In his own words they were great people and true christians.

Larry himself led a truly christian life and was most generous with his donations to many charities.

He also gave of his time, including this year collecting funds for various causes and in particular on Daffodil Day for the Irish Cancer Society.

It was not generally known that for many years after attending 10am mass in Cel-

Salesian College in the Oratory of St Raphael's.

The appropriate hymns and music were beautifully performed by Sarah Darlington and her organist.

The church was packed to capacity with all his old and not so old friends who loved him throughout his lifetime.

I am sure that Larry was looking down approvingly at the fond farewell he would have wished for and truly deserved.

After Mass his remains were interred in the Abbey Cemetery in Clane in accordance with his wishes.

Our world is a sadder and lesser place for his passing but we are all greatly enriched by the enormous legacy of love and gentleness he has left us.

May he rest in peace.

—Pat Kiely