



In Loving Memory of  
**Helena Burke**

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11/09/1967 – 09/08/2024

*Ar dheis Dé go raibh a h-anam dílis*

*Paix à son âme*

## Celebrating Helena



Helena Forde was born in Dublin on 11<sup>th</sup> September, 1967. She grew up in Greenhills with her mother Ellen, father Christy and siblings Susan, Gary and Robert. Helena's father Christy died in 1982.

As a child Helena was always extremely social and diligent, thriving when out with friends, Irish dancing, or when learning a new language at school.

Helena completed a primary degree in French and Irish in UCD. She worked in human resource management and then moved to London where she worked in advertising and sales. Helena and David met in 1991 and married in 1993. They made their first home in Harrow-on-the-Hill where they had their first child Ciara in 1995. Helena completed her postgraduate qualification in education and taught at secondary level in Harrow Wealdstone. In 1997 they returned to Ireland, moved to Crodaun Forest Park in Celbridge, and had Cillian in 1998 and Dearbhla in 1999.

Helena knew that her real love was working with younger children. In 2007 Helena re-trained as a primary teacher after completing treatment for her first bout of cancer which prompted her to look anew at how she wanted to devote her time.

Helena continued to be a hugely energetic, kind and positive presence in the lives of her family, friends, colleagues and pupils until her now peacefully passing from cancer diagnosed in 2023.



## **Entrance Hymn: In My Father's House – Led by Valerie Cullen (Helena's colleague in Scoil Mochua)**

'In my father's house for you, a room has been prepared.  
A place of peace, eternal rest, now awaits you there.  
No more sorrow, no more pain, no more cross to bear.  
No more strife and no more strain, just love beyond compare.

Family, friends and those you love, come to say farewell,  
In my father's house above, forever there, they know you'll dwell.

Those of us whose lives you touched, forever will remain. Filled with  
love, you gave so much, time and time again. A tender heart, a loving  
smile. A touch to heal the pain. And though you suffered, all the  
while, you never sought to blame

Instrumental

Family, friends and those you love, gather now to grieve.  
In my father's house above, your reward, you shall receive

In my father's house for you, a room has been prepared  
The time has come so take my hand, let me take, let me take you  
there.

The time we shared was short, but still, enshrined within our hearts  
Unprepared, but 'twas God's will, when we had to part.  
This world can never be the same, but still we must go on.  
Until together, once again, where we'll both belong'

## **Welcome on behalf of Helena's Family by Ciara (Helena's daughter)**

**The chief celebrant for today's liturgy is Fr. Eamonn Conway.** Eamonn is a childhood friend of David's. Eamonn conducted Helena and David's marriage in 1993 and celebrated their 25<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary in their home in 2018.

## **Presentation of tokens representing Helena** **Introduced by Dearbhla (Helena's daughter)**

### ***Eli Gubbins (Past pupil of Helena's)***

Eli presents a Scoil Mochua uniform jumper, representing the many pupils that Helena (Mum) guided and inspired with enthusiasm, dedication and unwavering commitment throughout her teaching career. She was a true professional and will be sorely missed by her pupils and colleagues alike.

### ***Annabelle Gubbins (representing Scoil Mochua pupils)***

Tugann Annabelle leabhar mór Gaeilge go dtí an altóir inniu. Léiríonn an leabhar mór seo an grá ollmhór a bhí ag Helena (ag mo Mham) don Ghaeilge agus an méid a rinne sí chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn, sa scoil, i rith na mblianta. Ba bhreá léi bheith ag léamh scéalta Gaeilge do na páistí i Scoil Mochua. Ní bheidh a leithéid ann arís.

### ***Elaine Forde (Helena's sister-in-law, Robert's wife)***

Elaine presents Helena's beloved Kindle. Reading acted as an escape that allowed Helena to unwind and find peace during busy days of teaching, socialising and family life.

Reading was always a central part of Helena's life, spending hours getting lost in fictional worlds while brushing up on vocabulary (and correcting the author's grammar).

### ***Laura King (Helena's sister-in-law, David's Sister)***

Laura presents a knitted baby hat, representing Helena's generosity and ever strong love for family and children.

Knitting was an activity that allowed Helena to stay present, and during her illness, gave her a positive reason to stay strong during dark days. Helena made it her personal mission to provide knitted hats and clothes for the newest members of the family and for premature babies at the Coombe maternity hospital, no matter how difficult her days became.

### ***Bernie Murphy (Helena's neighbour and friend)***

Bernie presents a bunch of bright flowers, representing Helena's natural ability to light up a room in an instant with her positive energy, humour and passion for life.

Helena continued to grow throughout her life, learning, spreading knowledge and love and providing the bright spark that we all need in our lives from time to time.

May her infectious energy live on through her family and friends.

***Robert Forde (Helena's brother who gave Helena away on her wedding day, 1<sup>st</sup> October 1993)***

Robert presents a picture of Helena and David on their wedding day when they promised to love and honour each other in marriage, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health all the days of their life. The picture symbolises their partnership and love over thirty-three years together.



**LITURGY OF THE WORD**

**First Reading: read by Orla Smyth (Helena's friend since moving to Crodaun Forest Park in 1997)**

**The first reading is from the prophet Isaiah (25: 6–9)**

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,  
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.

And he will destroy on this mountain  
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,  
the covering that is spread over all nations;  
he will swallow up death forever.

Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces,  
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,  
for the Lord has spoken.

It will be said on that day,

“See, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.

This is the Lord for whom we have waited;  
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

This is the Word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God.**

**Responsorial Psalm: Cloud's Veil – sung by Áebha,  
Ceoladh and Nia Lydon (David's nieces)**

‘Even when the rain hides the stars,  
Even though the mist swirls the hills,  
Even when the dark clouds veil the sky,  
You are by my side (2x)  
Even when the sun shall fall in sleep,  
Even when at dawn the sky shall weep,  
Even in the night when storms shall rise,  
God is by my side (2x)  
Bright the stars at night  
That mirror heaven's way to you.  
Bright the stars in light  
Where dwell the saints in love and truth.  
Deep the feast of life  
Where saints shall gather in deep peace.  
Deep in heaven's light  
Where sorrows pass beyond death's sleep  
Blest are they who sing  
The fellowship of saints in light.  
Blest is heaven's King.  
All saints adore the Lord, Most High.’

**Second Reading: read by Susan (Helena's sister, and  
bridesmaid at her wedding with this same reading)**

**The second reading is from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians  
(13: 1-13)**

If I speak in the tongues of humans or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now, we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

This is the Word of the Lord  
**Thanks be to God.**

### **Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia – led by Valerie Cullen**

#### **The Gospel Reading:**

#### **A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew (17: 1–8)**

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became bright as light. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will set up three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!” When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” And when they raised their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

#### **Homily by Fr. Eamonn**



## **PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL**

***Read by Emma Forde (Helena's God-daughter and niece, Robert's daughter)***

We pray for our fragile world – we pray for courageous and sincere leadership that recognises the dignity of every human person and strives for a peaceful and sustainable existence for all.

*Lord, hear us*

***Lord, graciously hear us.***

***Read by Annette Burke (Helena's sister-in-law, David's sister)***

We pray for our personal renewal and refreshment throughout our busy and fast lives.

May we find time and space to enjoy and benefit from family, friendship and community.

*Lord, hear us*

***Lord, graciously hear us.***

***Read by Hannah Gardiner (Past pupil of Helena's)***

Lord, Today we remember our lovely teacher Ms Burke. We give thanks for the kindness and care she showed to all of us. She helped us to love learning, she helped us to grow in confidence, and she prepared us for the next steps in our lives. Thug sí grá don Ghaeilge dúinn freisin. Chreid sí go hiomlán sa seanfhocal 'Mol and óige agus tiocfaidh said'".

A Thiarna éist linn

**A Thiarna, bí ceansa agus éist linn**



***Read by Helena O'Toole (the two Helenas did post-graduate teacher training together, becoming friends, and then more recently colleagues in Scoil Mochua)***

We pray for those who suffer due to illness and for those who care for them.

Today we remember with thanks the wonderful staff at the Hermitage Clinic, The Kildare & West Wicklow Community Palliative Team and Saint Brigid's Hospice, The Curragh.

*Lord, hear us*

***Lord, graciously hear us.***

***Read by Declan Carey (Helena's neighbour)***

We pray for all who the pain of loss is raw.

We pray for all of us here who miss and grieve Helena.

May her warmth and joy continue to provide presence and comfort in our lives.

*Lord, hear us*

*Lord, graciously hear us.*

***Read by Darragh Murphy (Helena's nephew, Susan's son)***

We remember, and pray for, our own dearly departed.

We pray particularly for Helena, Helena's father Christy, David's father Joe and all deceased members of the Forde, Doherty and Burke families.

*Lord, hear us*

*Lord, graciously hear us.*



## **LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST**

**Offertory Procession: A Mhuire Mháthair** – sung by  
Valerie Cullen

A Mhuire Mháthair, 'Sé seo mo ghuí  
Go maire Íosa, Go deo im' chroí

*Chorus:*

**Ave Maria, mo ghrá Ave,  
Is tusa mo mháthair 's máthair Dé.**

A Mhuire Mháthair, I rith mo shaoil  
Bí liom mar dhídean, ar gach aon bhaol.

*Chorus:*

A Mhuire Mháthair, 'tá lán de ghrást'  
Go raibh tú taobh liom, Ar uair mo bháis.

**The Offertory of Bread and Wine for the Eucharist is made by Ben Forde (Helena's nephew, Robert's son) and Marie Burke (Helena's sister-in-law)**

## **Acclamation of Faith: He is Lord** – led by Valerie Cullen

'He is Lord, He is Lord  
He has risen from the dead and He is Lord  
Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess  
That Jesus Christ is Lord

You're my Lord, You're my Lord  
You have risen from the dead and You're my Lord  
And my knee shall bow and my tongue confess  
That Jesus Christ is my Lord

Siya ay Diyos, Siya ay Diyos  
Siya'y nabuhay na muli at Siya ay Diyos  
Lahat ay luluhod, lahat ay magsasabi  
Na si Hesus ay Diyos'

## **Communion**

Taizé chants by David's nieces – Áebha, Ceoladh and Nia Lydon

- **Stay here and keep watch with me, watch and pray**

This represents the vigil kept with Helena as her family stayed with her and supported her as she passed to her death and into eternal peace.

- **Dans nos obscurités, Allume le feu qui ne s'éteint jamais** (Within our darkest night, there kindles a fire that never dies away)

This refers to the surprising strength we can be graced with in adversity, and how sharing the experience of difficult times can carry us forward, strengthening our community, resilience and faith.

## **Instrumental music by Helena's colleagues from Scoil**

**Mochua** - Róisín Kavanagh on the violin and Jennifer Brady playing the flute.



## **Shared Reflections**

**By Thich Nhat Hanh - read by Catherine Carragher (Scoil Mochua principal and Helena's friend of many years):**

One autumn day, I was in a park, absorbed in the contemplation of a very small but beautiful leaf, in the shape of a heart. Its colour was almost red, and it was barely hanging on the branch, nearly ready to fall down.

I spent a long time with it, and I asked the leaf a lot of questions ...

I asked the leaf whether it was scared because it was autumn, and the other leaves were falling.

The leaf told me, "No. During the whole spring and summer I was very alive. I worked hard and helped nourish the tree, and much of me is in the tree. Please do not say that I am just this form, because the form

of leaf is only a tiny part of me. I am the whole tree. I know that I am already inside the tree, and when I go back to the soil, I will continue to nourish the tree.

That's why I do not worry.

As I leave this branch and float to the ground, I will wave to the tree and tell her, 'I will see you again very soon.'"

**By Rev. Enda Lyons- read by Cillian Burke (Helena's son):**

Lord Jesus

We who are weak in faith and fearful for our own selves experience the hands of death as cold, grasping, gripping. But you knew that they are the hands of the Father. You gave yourself over with confidence into those is gentle, invisible hands. From your lips came the last words of your life: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit".

From you we know that those hands are so gentle. and so sure. They are like the hands of a Mother.

They embrace the soul as one would lift a little bird carefully and lovingly into his hands.

Now nothing is difficult any more, everything is easy, everything is Light and Grace. Everything is safe and secure in the heart of God where one can cry all one's anguish out, and the Father will kiss away the tears from the cheeks of his child.

Jesus, will you one day put our poor souls and our poor lives also into the hands of the Father? Put everything there the burden of our lives and the burden of our sins. Not on the scales of justice, but into the hands of the Father.

"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit".

**Helena's husband, David will speak on behalf of Helena and their family.**

## **Concluding Rite**

The Lord be with you. **And also, with you.**

May God, the almighty Father, grant us his joy. **Amen.**

May Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in his mercy help you in good times and in bad. **Amen.**

And may almighty God bless you all, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The mass is ended, go in the peace of Christ.

**Thanks be to God.**



## **FINAL COMMENDATION: Fr Eamonn will lead the final farewell and entrusting of Helena to God**

### **Casket Bearers:**

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| David   | – Helena's husband                            |
| Cillian | – Helena's son                                |
| Gary    | – Helena's brother                            |
| Robert  | – Helena's brother                            |
| Joseph  | – David's brother (best man at their wedding) |
| Kevin   | – David's brother                             |

**Recessional Song: Perhaps Love by John Denver,**  
***selected and sung by colleagues of Helena from Scoil***  
***Mochua.*** *They knew her so well – a favourite of Helena's.*

'Perhaps love is like a resting place  
A shelter from the storm  
It exists to give you comfort  
It is there to keep you warm  
And in those times of trouble  
When you are most alone  
The memory of love will bring you home  
Perhaps love is like a window  
Perhaps an open door  
It invites you to come closer  
It wants to show you more  
And even if you lose yourself  
And don't know what to do  
The memory of love will see you through  
Oh, love to some is like a cloud  
To some as strong as steel  
For some a way of living  
For some a way to feel  
And some say love is holding on  
And some say letting go  
And some say love is everything  
And some say they don't know  
Perhaps love is like the ocean  
Full of conflict, full of pain  
Like a fire when it's cold outside  
Or thunder when it rains  
If I should live forever  
And all my dreams come true  
My memories of love will be of you'



## **Appendix**

### **Personal Reflection: On The Death of The Beloved** by John O'Donohue

*Though we need to weep your loss,  
You dwell in that safe place in our hearts,  
Where no storm or night or pain can reach you.*

*Your love was like the dawn  
Brightening over our lives  
Awakening beneath the dark  
A further adventure of colour.*

*The sound of your voice  
Found for us  
A new music  
That brightened everything.*

*Whatever you enfolded in your gaze  
Quickened in the joy of its being;  
You placed smiles like flowers  
On the altar of the heart.  
Your mind always sparkled  
With wonder at things.*

*Though your days here were brief,  
Your spirit was live, awake, complete.*

*We look towards each other no longer  
From the old distance of our names;  
Now you dwell inside the rhythm of breath,  
As close to us as we are to ourselves.*

*Though we cannot see you with outward eyes,  
We know our soul's gaze is upon your face,  
Smiling back at us from within everything  
To which we bring our best refinement.*

*Let us not look for you only in memory,  
Where we would grow lonely without you.  
You would want us to find you in presence,  
Beside us when beauty brightens,  
When kindness glows  
And music echoes eternal tones.*

*When orchids brighten the earth,  
Darkest winter has turned to spring;  
May this dark grief flower with hope  
In every heart that loves you.*

*May you continue to inspire us:*

*To enter each day with a generous heart.  
To serve the call of courage and love  
Until we see your beautiful face again  
In that land where there is no more separation,  
Where all tears will be wiped from our mind,  
And where we will never lose you again.*



As a token of our appreciation for the incredible support and care provided to Helena and our family by the St. Brigid's Hospice and their Community Palliative team, and with their agreement, we invite you to consider joining us in making a contribution to provide practical supports to those they care for.

We thank you for your presence and support of us today.

David, Ciara, Cillian and Dearbhla Burke.

