

# Over The Rainbow

Orla Sheehan

The summer my father was dying, I played the piano a lot. The music soothed my spirit and gave me some peace. It was a lovely piano, a wedding anniversary present to my Mum when I was only a twinkle. One of my favourite pieces to play was Somewhere Over The Rainbow. Like the lyrics, in the song, I wished my troubles would melt away like lemon drops. I had a lot going on in my young life: coming to terms with a broken dream of my own, being bull-dozed at work by a bully, my beloved father's lingering illness that was taking its toll on all of us, most of all on him. I prayed that God would take him soon, for he was suffering terribly from the cancer that penetrated his bones.

My Dad had his own prayer in his heart, a simple wish. He had asked God for the grace of living until his wedding anniversary. I bought the card for him a few weeks before, written and placed in the bedside drawer. A few nights later, he slipped into a coma. Amazingly, on the morning of their wedding anniversary, he came round, smiled and said, "Orla, go and get your mother". Mum was in the kitchen. They chatted for half an hour, then she called me to come and say good bye too. His eyes had already glazed over again. It was a special time, for my Mum. God had answered his prayer; it happened 39 years to the very time they exchanged their wedding vows. He died the following day.

My Mum sat down in the kitchen and told me to put the kettle on. "Your father's a case", she said, laughing, "you'll never guess the last thing he said to me?" They met over a pair of gloves, when she was 18 years old. She had a mad notion of him and called to his workplace to do some business for her father. She left her gloves behind. All down the years Dad teased Mum, that she left the gloves behind on purpose, while she stuck to her guns, insisting it was her forgetfulness. My father returned the gloves, driving some 15 miles to her family home in County Down. My Gran, answered the door, liked the look of him and invited him in for tea, much to my Mum's delight. The first date followed shortly and they married three years later. We'd all heard it a hundred times, sometimes followed by his favourite party piece, The Star of the County Down and then the Green Glens of Antrim for himself.

Saying their goodbyes, that morning, he thanked my Mum for their lovely life together and gave her the card. His last words to her, "You know Oonagh, weren't you the quere lucky woman that wore gloves!" He made her laugh from her toes at the saddest of times. Dad, a gentle, quiet man of few words, yet in our home, always had the last say. I only realised the anchor he was for all the family, after he died. In that last blessing from God on their marriage, he told Mum that he loved her and would be waiting for her. He didn't have too long to wait. She died two years later. My grief, for a time, was immense. I still miss his wisdom and their love.

It is good to have dreams and wishes. We all have dreams that we "dare to dream really do come true". Pope Francis recently said "it is important to dream in the family and never forget the dreams you have as boyfriend and girlfriend". He continued, "I would like to tell you something very personal. I like St. Joseph very much. He is a strong man of silence. On my desk I have a statue of St Joseph, sleeping. While sleeping, he looks after the Church. When I have a problem or difficulty, I write it on a piece of paper and I put it under his statue so that he can dream about it. This means, please pray St. Joseph, for this problem".

In the same homily, our Holy Father said, "Joseph was chosen by God to be foster father of Jesus and the husband of Mary. As Christians, you too are called, like Joseph, to make a home for Jesus. You make a home for him in your hearts, your families, your parishes and communities". Yet how many homes in Ireland today make room for Jesus? How many homes have false gods in pride of place, like statues of Buddha or other pagan symbols? How many parents go to yoga, reiki, or mindfulness courses instead of bringing their children to the sacraments? How many people make the grave mistake of going to fortune-tellers instead of trusting in God? How many put money before God and their marriage? How many encourage their adult children to live together in mortal sin before they get married?

How many think that same-sex partnerships are ok? How many children are not even making their First Holy Communion? What would our ancestors, who walked miles to mass rocks to receive the Eucharist, and even died for their faith, make of it? How many families live without the sacrament of confession? How many have no concept of sin, living for the here and now, with no thought for their souls? How many families pray together? Love apart, it is prayer, that is the glue that keeps a family together.

How many of our schools make too little room for Jesus? Public buildings, hospitals, hotels, beauty salons etc. are all going the same way. Buddha is

everywhere! Secularisation of our schools and a lack of good catechesis, has been a problem for years. Children also need to learn wisdom from above for "our best thinking is done with the heart and not the brain". Recently, the Taoiseach, said that after the referendum, catholic schools will be expected to teach children about same sex marriage; it is the stuff of nightmares. It seems that the state wishes to exile Christ and His Church from the country completely. The recent child and relationships bill was shockingly, passed, almost unchallenged. The house is in a shambles!

My Dad always finished his prayers, with a prayer

## MASS FOR IRELAND THE LAMB WILL CONQUER

✠  
KNOCK  
BASILICA

**SATURDAY 25TH APRIL 2015 at 3 P.M. ROSARY AT 2 P.M.**

*"They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with Him are called and chosen and faithful."*  
Revelation 17:14

**CELEBRANT: FR JOHN MOCKLER  
and fellow priests**

**We invite the people of Ireland to come and unite in prayer for protection of the sanctity of marriage, families and human life and for our country.**

*"Let us not underestimate the power of so many people united in prayer".*  
Pope Francis

**An Teaghlach Naofa  
[www.anteaghlachnaofa.ie](http://www.anteaghlachnaofa.ie)**

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to the Holy Family – “Jesus, Mary and Joseph I give you my heart and my soul, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, assist me in my last agony, Jesus Mary and Joseph may I breathe forth my soul in peace with you, Amen”. My own prayer to the Holy Family is very simple, “Jesus Mary and Joseph, I love you, pray for my family and bring us all to heaven”. The Holy Family have their work cut out, for, like many catholic families, the devil has got a hold and we are in bad shape. The battle lines are drawn. And if this can happen to a once faithful family, what chance then for children who have no experience of growing up in a Christian home? Every family in Ireland has the same story to tell. We just have to keep praying and trust in God’s mercy.

Most of us know the blessing it is to be born to good parents, who love and cherish us and nurture us in the catholic faith. Children live what they learn. Yes, there are broken marriages, or single parent families, where single parents do an excellent job in raising their children, but, what must it be like for a child to grow up in the unnatural environment of two Mums or two Dads? Where are the role models of Christian love in keeping with God’s plan for marriage and children? Who will lead morning prayers, teach the guardian angel prayer or whisper a prayer in their child’s ear after they have received Holy Communion? Who will lead the rosary, or The Angelus or even grace before meals? Who will guide with wisdom? Where are the treasures of the faith? Where are the fruits of the Spirit? How can same sex parents teach children about right and wrong and the truths of the Gospel when they, themselves are living against God’s commandments? The Bible tells us that the fruits of the Spirit are: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22). Every child needs to witness these in their home. The Holy Spirit cannot possibly be present in a family, where parents are living a same sex relationship. Children and young people need a love of God to sustain them through the trials of life.

Experiences of children brought up in same sex relationships make for harrowing reading. Recently, four adult children of homosexual parents filed court briefings in the US, against legalisation of same sex marriage. A daughter of a lesbian mother who had a series of female partners said, “I grew up with a parent and her partner in an atmosphere in which gay ideology was used as a tool of repression, retribution and abuse”. Another said, that the lack of a father figure in his life combined with the influence of the radical gay culture in which he was raised caused devastation and led to him becoming a homosexual prostitute in his teens. “I experienced a great deal of sexual confusion. I had an inexplicable compulsion to have sex with older males and wanted to have sex with an older man, my father’s age, though at the time I scarcely understand what I was doing. In such a climate, I must conclude that placing children in same sex couples’ homes is dangerous”, he said. About the LGBT lobby, one said, “these specialist interest groups support political and legal objectives towards same sex marriage ignoring horrendous inequality, permanent losses and prejudice to children in the name of adult sexual rights”.

There is also a link between homosexuality and paedophilia. One report suggests that "efforts to target children both for their own sexual pleasure and to enlarge the homosexual movement constitute an unmistakable attack on the family unit". Furthermore, the incidence of homosexual abuse of children is much higher than heterosexual abuse. The passing of the child and relationships bill in Ireland, puts Irish children at much greater risk of sexual abuse.

People intending to vote yes in the same-sex marriage referendum, argue that there are many marriages that are far from healthy for children. Addictions, abuse, violence, intolerance, adultery, all cause huge pain for children. Yes, many marriages have problems and can go through very bad patches, but every child still has a right to a father and a mother. Stormy marriages are no excuse to vote for same sex marriage! It is important to recognise, too, that people who are gay are not necessarily in favour of same

sex marriage. Catholics, who are homosexual, usually recognise that marriage is a sacrament and between a man and a woman. Many homosexuals are offended by gay pride movements and how anti-Christ they can be. It is also possible through healing and deliverance, to be healed of the spirit of homosexuality, often present as a spirit of infestation. Children who are sexually abused as teenagers, often grow up confused, thinking they are gay, when they are not.

The gay Italian fashion icons, Dolce and Gabbana, in a recent interview with Panorama magazine said, “the only family is a traditional one”. Gabbana said, “I am opposed to the idea of a child growing up with two gay parents”. He said, “the family is not a fad, in it there is a supernatural sense of belonging”. His partner, Dolce, said “procreation must be an act of love, children born through artificial insemination or egg donors are synthetic children, uterus for rent, semen chosen from a catalogue. Life has a natural flow; these are things that should not be changed”. Their comments have met with huge opposition from lesbian and gay rights lobby. LGBT News Italia called for a boycott of their designer clothes. So now we have gay couples, who refuse to conform to the LGBT ideals, being persecuted too.

In the North of Ireland, the Equality Commission have brought a landmark case against Asher’s Bakery on behalf of a gay rights activist. The family run bakery in County Antrim, turned down a request for a cake with a “support gay marriage” slogan on it. In the summing up, last week, the QC for Ashers posed the question “When the McArthurs put on their baker’s apron, must they put aside their religious beliefs, the very core of who they are?” The McArthurs stated, “we believe that the Word of God is of greater importance than the words of the Equality Commission”.

The groups that work to destroy marriage, family and human life in Ireland are so united. Our opponents are very focused and together. We, the catholic laity, are not nearly as united as we should be. Pope Francis tweeted last week “the laity are called to become the leaven of Christian living within society”. Well, the bread won’t rise unless the dough is well mixed. Now, is the time for unity. Everyone needs to answer Our Lady’s call and come together behind the Lamb. It is not about us, or which prayer group we belong to, it is about the Holy Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Catholic faith has served the people of Ireland well for generations, “stirring the embers of the nation as the sea wind sways the sea”. For a rebellion to bring about change, it must be a rebellion of faith. It is time for the people of Ireland to stand up and act. We need to claim back the faith from those who are stealing our greatest treasures, our catholic faith and the love of Christ from our communities. It is also time, to claim back the rainbow, the sign of God’s covenant with His people.

Where do we start? St John Paul, on his visit to Knock - “the goal of my journey to Ireland” - said “like so many times before, when the Church has faced a new challenge, we turn to Mary, the Mother of God and the seat of wisdom, trusting that She will show us again the way to Her Son”. In Knock, he prayed “we entrust to your motherly care the land of Ireland, where you have been and are so much loved. Help this land to stay true to your Son always – Queen of Ireland, Mary Mother of the heavenly Church, keep Ireland true to her spiritual tradition and her Christian heritage”. Only Our Lady, Her Holy Family and Her beloved spouse the Holy Spirit can save the soul of Ireland now.

For 136 years, thousands of Irish families have travelled to Knock to pray and walk the Holy Ground. For here, on Thursday 21st August 1879, the Holy Family with St John, the most beloved of the apostles, visited 15 humble people, men, women and children. Our Lady of Knock, has since drawn millions to Her shrine, to pray to Her Divine Son. Knock, the only place in the world where Christ appeared as the Lamb of God.

Of the Knock witnesses, Mary Byrne, gives the most vivid description of Christ. “Above the altar, and resting on it, was a lamb. On the body of the lamb and around it I saw golden stars or small brilliant lights, glittering like jets or glass balls, reflecting the light of some luminous body”. The Bible tells us, “They will make war on the Lamb and the Lamb will conquer them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with Him are called and chosen and faithful” (Rev. 17.14). We need to claim this promise of victory now and unite with Him behind His standard. Patrick Hill said, “On the altar stool a lamb, the size of a lamb 8 weeks old, the face of the lamb was fronting west and looking in the direction of the Blessed Virgin and St Joseph. Christ was looking towards His parents, Mary and Joseph, who protected Him from so much evil, even as an Infant.

The first organised pilgrimage to Knock was in early March 1880 - the Holy Family confraternity from Limerick city. On the feast of the Annunciation, later that month, 15000 people gathered at the shrine. The Irish Times reported it as “large crowds continued, coming and going the whole day long, nothing is heard but the voices of prayer while on the faces of young and old, men, women and children, an enthusiasm and religious fervour to the highest degree”. As news of the apparitions spread across the world, pilgrims came from the US and Europe. One pilgrim from Massachusetts wrote in the Cork Examiner “one can see how deeply implanted devotion to the Blessed Virgin is in the inhabitants of the island of saints. It is as essential a constituent of their character as the soul is of a human being”. On 29th September 1940, the feast of St Michael the Archangel, one year into World War II, 35000 children gathered in Knock to pray for world peace. Did their prayers protect Ireland from the Nazis? Well the Nazis are back, in our own governments, North and South. Ireland needs to ask our children to come to Knock and pray again. It is time for another national children’s pilgrimage, where every child can learn about Knock and pray for their families and their country.

Knock has sustained people of Ireland through decades of trial. At the time of the apparitions, the Holy Family brought great hope to an Ireland that was stricken with poverty and famine where unemployment, evictions and emigration were the order of the day. Since then, Knock remains a stable light, carrying the people of Ireland through many battles such as the horrors of The Irish Civil War and the years of “The Troubles”. Now, all of Ireland is at war, for our nation faces the greatest of all battles, huge efforts to destroy the institute of marriage in the South and to legalise abortion in the North. We are in the midst of the final battle, the clash between good and evil. People look at and lament the horrors facing families in the Middle East, and rightly so, yet seem blind to the war raging at families here. People say they don’t wish to offend, well God is greatly offended, as are His faithful people.

Pope Francis tells us, “Like St Joseph, once we have heard God’s voice, we must rise from our slumber; we must get up and act”. It is the duty of every baptised man, woman and child in Ireland, to get up and act. Men of Ireland, rise up with St Joseph and stir your family. Come with your family and pray to protect them and your country from the evils that want to destroy them both. “Faithful sons and daughters of Mary”, come to Knock for the Mass for Ireland on Saturday 25th April, feast day of St Mark the Evangelist. St Mark, one of the earliest witnesses to Christ, present at the wedding feast of Cana. Rise up people of Ireland, these are the times we are called to give witness. The Lamb Will Conquer!

For further information on the Mass for Ireland and buses going from your area, please contact one of the numbers on the advert or email [info@anteaghlachnaofa.ie](mailto:info@anteaghlachnaofa.ie). All prayer groups and banners welcome. Stay over, or return to Knock the next day, for the day of Eucharistic Adoration on the 26th. For a family prayer resource including the rosary, chaplets, devotions and the novena to the Holy Cloak of St Joseph visit [www.therosary.net](http://www.therosary.net). Email for correspondence – [orlaith@anteaghlachnaofa.ie](mailto:orlaith@anteaghlachnaofa.ie)