

Last Monday I received the news that Mrs Betty Hegarty had died in her home on the Old Carrickbrack Road and the family began the preparations for her funeral today. Over these last few days, in conversations with her family and with those who had known her in the area I gained a picture of a remarkable lady. Today the family, through a series of readings and tributes, will be sharing some of their memories, ways in which Betty Hegarty touched their lives and will continue to inspire them. The many friends who have gathered here have come to offer their own thanks for Betty and to stand alongside her family at this time. Standing as we do, in the approach to Good Friday and Easter, we acknowledge the reality of death, of mortality and proclaim, in the words of a prayer I will use later in this service, ‘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.’. It is that horizon, that limit to our sight, that Betty sought to explore, to extend in her own mind, in the minds of others.

Betty Hegarty grew up in Clontarf within the fellowship of the Presbyterian Church. She met and married her husband Brian and they established their home in Howth on the Old Carrickbrack Road and here they reared their family Robin, Andrew and Liz. The family recall a woman with a wide range of interests. She was very much a mother, devoting herself to the care of her children, developing their interests and their individuality.

A voracious reader, she loved the theatre and films. She loved travel and would until very recently have been a frequent visitor to India. She had a love of people and a passion for justice. A keen advocate of women’s rights, she was involved in education for disadvantaged women in Tallaght.

Her death was sudden and unexpected and this has been a shock to the family but Betty was clearly comfortable with her mortality. She would have spoken of the big adventure of death. I think she could have identified with that expression I quoted earlier, ‘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.’ The family remember her as a deeply spiritual woman. A period of meditation would have been part of her daily routine and she was a core member of a group meeting in town.

So today we gather to thank God for Betty Hegerty; a beloved mother, a woman with a zest for life, one with a deep concern for people, for the disadvantaged, for justice, one who was clearly very much at peace with herself.

We pray with and for her family and for ourselves as we commend her to Almighty 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.