

Tribute by Grainne Kelly, Mucklagh. 28th June 2012 – Rahan Hall.

I'm delighted to be here tonight to celebrate with Fr. Johnny on the 40th anniversary of his ordination. I have to say when I was first asked I smiled but I was also honoured and humbled to be asked to speak on behalf of the parishioners but also delighted to honour Fr. Johnny.

I have thought a lot about what to say tonight and I suppose firstly what I do think is that you underestimate the effect you have on people and you underestimate the good work that you do. I know you see it as nothing exceptional but it is. Father you have certainly immersed yourself within the fabric of the parish and all its people, young and old.

Our parish is a big parish and an extremely proud one and at any given time there are always many celebrations and good times happening. On these occasions you are out with your camera recording them and joining in the festivities. They always appear on a website before anyone has them printed.

There have been tragedies and sad times too, the past week has certainly been tough on the people of the parish as well as neighbouring parishes. No doubt there will be more to come but like any sort of occasion to see everyone getting out and lending a helping hand no matter what the job and what the weather is an indication of the spirit of the people of Rahan Mucklagh and the Island. I have heard it said many times to me that the support and help you give to all families in their times of need is second to none. You know the right thing to say and when to say it. Not easy but very much appreciated.

I want to mention your involvement with GAA. I suppose that's where we first were in business together. I was your assistant PRO and if I knew then that you would be face booking, twittering and googling on a regular basis I would have made better use of you! You wanted to know everything that was going on and who everyone was and you remembered. The teams, the games, results, the elections, the presentations the teams managers everything. It was all important to you.

The mass every St. Patrick's day was your idea and a great idea to bring everyone together and one which will long continue. I think we could do with a bit more involvement there but I'm sure it's on your list of things to do and no doubt I'll get a call about it, or I should warn the members of the gaa and indeed any organisations that are here tonight that if you see Fr. Johnny's name on your phone, answer it or call him back immediately, you'll have less to do in the long run.

Father you came at a time when the parish needed funds for repair work in Mucklagh church. I know in our house we talked about it and thought how tough that was going to be. Father you got yourself a committee that worked, and worked hard and were more successful than any thought possible. You took the risk for the good of the parishioners for our generation and many more behind us. It was really fantastic work and work which you still don't take full credit for.

As I said you're involved everywhere. I have seen you in Killina presentation secondary school, surrounded by kids going through face book, or apps or photos or whatever connects them to you and you to them. That is no easy task, they are great kids no doubt but to see them calling out "hey father how are you?" I think that says as much about you as them. And that is only one school, I presume it's the same in all 3.

Not just the young but also the not so young within the nursing home, I have seen you with the residents in the nursing home. I know your mother is there, and I am sorry that she is not here tonight too. You are much at home there as the school. Having met your mother many times over the years it is easy to see where you get easy smile, wit and good humour. She is I presume very proud of you and all her family no mother has favourites! That's what mom says anyway!

I know that I have only mentioned some of the organisations that you are involved in and only some of the work that you do from the churches, convent and schools and I apologise to those that I have left out but it is just a snapshot of what you do. I hope it gives an idea of the type of connections that you have made and continue to make in the parish.

I can also say you have changed the look of the parish - well Mucklagh anyway, from Screggan cross to our house is so bright now with no trees! On a serious note, I heard the bang the day of your accident and saw you pass by our window. My heart went out to you and how lucky you were. I said to you after that your time hadn't come and that you had a lot more work to do. God was with you that day and certainly looked after you and everyone on that road. The crows aren't happy but we can live with that.

I can't say enough, on behalf of everyone here that you really do underestimate your good works and deeds for us all. I know that you see no need for us to honour you tonight but I think we will agree to disagree, you deserve every last bit of it. Take all the good wishes home with you and treasure for a long time. Through all my dealings with you father I have to say that at all times your faith and good will is an inspiration. You have no doubt that God is good and that life is good and that we all have someone looking out for us.

I wish you every best wish I can, continue to do the good work, keep the faith and keep us all on our toes. Thank you for making this your home and thank you on behalf of everyone here and all your friends. Continued best wishes Father.