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Good morning everyone, and thank you for being here to honour my mum, Mary Bridget O'Sullivan — our Mum, our Nana Mary.

We are gathered in faith today, and that feels right, because faith was the quiet current that ran through Mum's life. She was born on 14 March 1956 in Tralee, County Kerry, and she went home to God on 2 February this year, at the age of 69. Between those dates is a life poured out for others — steady, musical, kind.

She was Mary, but to me she was simply Mum — my loving mum and my best friend. We spoke every day. Some calls were five minutes for a quick "Did you eat?" and some were an hour of laughter, recipes, small parish gossip, and plans for Sunday. If I close my eyes, I can still see her standing at the kettle, ready before I even had my coat off. That was Mum's first principle: an open door, the kettle always on.

Mum studied education at UCC and taught primary school in Cork for 35 years. It suited her down to the ground: a classroom, a tin whistle in the top drawer, a cúpla focal spilled into every subject, a child's hand slipping into hers. She had endless patience that looked like magic from the outside and like determination from the inside. "Try again, a stór," she'd say, and somehow the trying became possible.

She loved Gaeilge and music, and she gave them to her pupils like gifts. Many of you learned your first sean-nós song from her, or your first fiddle notes, or the beauty of a well-turned Irish phrase. She believed education opened doors, but more than that, it opened hearts. She taught the parts of the day that aren't in the curriculum — kindness, fairness, and how to listen properly.

Outside the classroom, Mum belonged to her parish and to the local GAA club. You'd find her with the choir on a Sunday, steadying the altos and smiling across

a hymn, or on the sideline coaching camogie with that mixture of wit and encouragement that made girls stand taller. She wasn't loud about it. She just showed up, week after week, the way pillars do — standing there so the rest of us could lean.

She married Dad — Seán — 45 years ago. The two of them had the kind of partnership that starts with love and keeps going with humour, respect and a thousand small acts no one else sees. Together they raised three of us — Niamh, Patrick, and me — and they welcomed five grandchildren who turned “Mary” into “Nana Mary” with adoration and toast crumbs. Her Sunday roasts were less about the meat and more about the miracle of gathering: coats on the banister, biscuits hidden for small hands, and the smell of brown bread sneaking out of the oven before grace was said.

Mum had her own small adventures. My favourite memory is our sunrise swims at Inchydoney. The world would still be blue and quiet, and there we'd be, two eejits in the water before the gulls had their breakfast. Afterwards, wrapped in towels, we'd pour tea from a flask that tasted a little of the sea, and her laugh would carry on the wind like a tune you can't forget. That laugh could cut through any fog.

At home, the garden was her orchestra — lupins, lavender, and a tomato plant she swore understood Irish. When she baked, the house softened around her: brown bread that could steady a soul, apple tarts with a crust you'd nearly applaud. In the evenings, there might be a crossword open, a trad session on the radio, and her running commentary — warm, witty, generous, and sharper than she let on. She never had to be the loudest in the room. She had a way of listening that made you brave enough to tell the truth.

People will miss her morning phone calls. They'll miss the Sunday roasts. They'll miss the way she made everyone feel at home, even if you were only dropping in to borrow a tin or return a book. But what I think we'll miss most is the steadying presence behind all of that — her quietly determined kindness. She could turn a problem over with patience until a better shape appeared. And she

could find the right word without many words at all.
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As a family, we want to say thank you to the staff at Mercy University Hospital. Your care was gentle, human, and skillful, and we are deeply grateful. In her last wishes, Mum asked that in lieu of flowers, donations be made to St. Vincent de Paul — a simple request that sounds exactly like her: if there's something to give, give it where it's needed.

Mum believed in community in the way you believe in a doorframe — you lean on it without thinking. She believed in faith not as a badge but as a practice: show up, sing the hymn, check on the neighbour, coach the under-12s, keep the kettle ready. She believed in education as a lifelong thing — which may explain her delight when a grandchild used a new word and her equal delight when someone got the crossword's nine-letter clue.

If you want to know how to keep her with us, do what she did. Say the kind thing when it costs a little. Put an extra spud in the pot. Teach a child a song. Use your Irish in the queue and don't apologise for it. Tend your garden. Ring someone first thing in the morning, just to say, "How are you, really?" And when the sun peaks over the edge of the sea, don't be afraid to get your feet wet.

Mum, you were our teacher long before any classroom and long after the bell. You taught us that patience is a form of love, that humour can soften a hard day, and that hospitality is a prayer with cups and plates. You taught us to belong — to family, to parish, to place — and to make room for others at the table.

Today we commend you to God with gratitude for every ordinary miracle you made in an ordinary week. In this Mass, with the choir you loved and the community you helped build, we give thanks for your life. We will carry your lessons in how we raise our children, in how we greet our neighbours, and in how we meet each new morning.

Slán go fóill, Mum. Slán, Nana Mary.

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We'll see you in the music, in the garden, in the waves at Inchydoney, and in the honest goodness of a well-baked loaf.

Thank you for everything. Go raibh maith agat ó chroí. May you rest in peace, and may we be worthy of the love you left in our keeping.

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