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Dear family, dear friends, thank you for being here today as we commend to God the soul of my husband, Patrick O’Connell — our Paddy — and as we give thanks for the gift he has been to us.

Paddy was born on the 12th of March, 1971, in Cork, and he left us peacefully at the age of fifty-three.
Those dates frame a life, but they do not begin to hold it.
What holds today are the people gathered, and the work of his hands, and the echoes of his laugh that seem, even now, to linger at the door.

He grew up in Cork city, the son of Mary and the late Denis, brother to Fiona and Cormac, and Cork never quite left him, even when work brought him to Dublin.
He carried the city in his voice, in his wit, and in the way he greeted people — open, sure, and with a ready smile.
At University College Cork he studied civil engineering, not for prestige, but because he wanted to build things that made everyday life safer and steadier.
That was his calling: roads that held in the rain, bridges that you trusted without thinking.
Quiet work, done well.

We married and built our own bridge, twenty-eight years strong, partners in everything — from raising Aoife and Liam to shouting encouragement along the sidelines of the local GAA, sometimes louder than we intended.
If you stood near Paddy at a match, you learned quickly that support can be both enthusiastic and fair.
He had no time for grudges, only for effort and for the next ball in.
And no matter whose child was playing, he found a word that settled nerves and lifted shoulders.

My favourite memory sits like a warm stone in the hand.

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A windswept walk on Inchydoney Beach — January air cutting across the sand, the sky that particular West Cork grey that promises nothing and gives you everything.
I'd pulled on my gloves against the cold.
He reached for my hand, then paused, then laughed that big laugh of his, and told me to check my glove.
There was a ring tucked in the fingertip, and a question in his eyes that answered itself.
He chose a simple way to ask for a life, and I said yes to a lifetime of steady ground.

Paddy gave his time the way other people give compliments — freely, and without making a show of it.
He mentored younger engineers as if it were part of the job description, which in his mind it was.
He helped shape community infrastructure across Munster and Leinster, then headed to a club meeting or a charity collection as if the day had only begun.
He was a coach who kept a spare pair of boots in the car, a volunteer who stacked chairs when the hall emptied, a man who remembered your child's name and the last match they played.

He loved hurling, and he loved a hill under his feet: the Wicklow Mountains drew him out in all weathers.
On a bright morning he'd be gone early, a flask and a plan, back with cheeks reddened and stories of a view that somehow made everything clearer.
And when the tide was right, he'd plunge into the sea without ceremony, head up through the cold with that expression that said, here we are, fully alive.
At a trad session he was the one in the corner, tapping his foot, not needing to be centre-stage, just happy to be in the current of a tune.

What defined him were not grand gestures but firm lines.
Family first.
Fairness.
Keeping one's word.

Community service that didn’t end when the photograph was taken.
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Faith that was grounded in everyday kindness — lighting a candle, stopping for a chat, offering a lift, saying nothing about it after.
He was steady, witty in the way that heals rather than cuts, generous with his time, quietly courageous, and unfailingly loyal.

As a husband, he was my harbour.
As a dad, he was Aoife and Liam’s compass — honest counsel, patient teaching, and the rare gift of knowing when to speak and when to simply stand close.
As a son and brother, he honoured Mary, and he carried his father Denis forward in the way he lived — not with big talk, but with dependable action.

We will miss many things.
His big laugh that could roll across a room and draw strangers into the circle.
His practical advice — the kind that turned problems into steps you could take.
And especially the welcome he gave on the sidelines, where no one stood alone if Paddy was there.

In recent months, we saw again the courage he carried so quietly.
He met his illness with pragmatism, humour, and care for others before himself.
He kept saying, we’ll take it one day at a time, and he meant it.
On behalf of our family, I want to offer heartfelt thanks to the staff at St. Vincent’s Hospital.
You met our days with skill and kindness, and we will not forget it.

Today, in this Holy Mass, we entrust Paddy to the mercy and love he trusted all his life.
For those of us who remain, the comfort is in the work he leaves us to do.
Mind one another.
Keep your word.
Find the time to mentor, to coach, to volunteer, especially where young people gather and grow.
In Paddy’s spirit, please support your local GAA club — show up, roll your sleeves, make a corner of the world stronger and kinder.

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When we walk a road he helped design, cross a bridge without thinking, watch a match in the rain, or hear a bodhrán in the evening, let us recognise him there — not as something lost, but as something continuing.
Love does not end; it changes its address and asks us to carry it on.

Paddy, mo chroí, thank you.
For the glove and the ring.
For the laughter and the ballast.
For the quiet service that taught our children what a life well-lived looks like.

Go gently now.
We will see you in the places you loved and in the goodness you set in motion.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

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