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Friends, family, neighbours—thank you for gathering here today to honour the life of Patrick O’Connell, our Paddy.

Born on 17 March 1982, and called home on 2 April 2026 at just 44, Paddy’s life was shorter than any of us would wish, but it was full—full of love, of quiet service, of laughter that could ease a room, and of a faith carried gently rather than loudly.

We first met in secondary school in Cork, two eejits with schoolbags and big notions.

From then on we were best mates, each other’s rock through thick and thin.

We grew up side by side in Bishopstown, learning the same lessons—how to stick by your own, how to fix what was broken, and how to tell a story without wasting a word.

Paddy took that knack for steady hands and steady words into a life’s work.

He studied civil engineering at UCC and went on to shape the roads and bridges of Munster, the kind of work you rarely notice when it’s done right.

He cared about doing it right—safe, sustainable design, thinking ahead to the people who’d walk and drive those roads long after our names are forgotten.

He did a spell in London, learned what he needed to learn, and then came home to Limerick to be closer to family, because that was the whole point for him: to build, and to belong.

At the centre of everything was his beloved Aoife.

He was a devoted dad to Saoirse and Cian, the proudest man on the sideline, the softest touch at bedtime.

He was the cherished son of Mairéad and Séamus, brother to Niamh and Eamon, and the adored uncle to a full gaggle of nieces and nephews who knew that “Uncle Paddy” was always the first to show up and the last to leave.

He had time for people.

Not in the big showy way, but in the real way—turning up with a spanner, a lift, or a listening ear over a cuppa.

He brought that same heart to coaching the under-12s with the local GAA.

He organised clean-up days and never took a bow.

And just last year he completed a charity cycle for Pieta House, legs burning, smile steady, because he believed community isn't something you talk about—it's something you keep going.

He was a calming presence, generous to a fault, and he carried that dry Cork wit like a well-worn tool, used sparingly and to good effect.

When a plan went sideways, he'd tilt his head, offer one line that cut through the noise, and somehow everything seemed simple again.

I carry a hundred memories of him, but one in particular won't leave me.

We took a spontaneous road trip to the Cliffs of Moher in a battered old Micra that sounded like it had a chesty cough.

The rain was horizontal, the radio was blaring trad so loud the speakers rattled, and we laughed until our sides hurt.

There was nothing to prove—no summit to conquer—just the joy of being where sea meets sky and the wind roars in your ears, and knowing your friend is right there beside you, sure as the cliff under your feet.

That was Paddy—always finding the solid ground, even in a storm.

He loved hurling, coastal hikes, and sea swims at Kilkee that left your skin tingling and your head clear.

He loved trad sessions in the local, and Munster rugby on a wet Saturday, the small rituals that stitch a place and a life together.

He believed in honesty, in loyalty to family and friends, and in service to the people around him.

And he held his faith quietly, like a lantern cupped from the wind.

We'll miss his easy laugh.

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We'll miss his steady advice, offered across a kitchen table, two mugs warming the hands while the words did their work.

We'll miss the way he made people feel safe and seen—the lift of his eyebrow, the nod that said, “I’m here. We’ll sort it.”

Today we grieve, but we also give thanks for the bridges he built, both of concrete and of kindness.

Some of them cross rivers.

More of them cross hard days.

To Aoife, Saoirse, and Cian—your grief is heavy and your love is deeper still.

May you feel Paddy’s strength in the quiet—on school runs, on sidelines, on nights when the house settles and the kettle hums.

To Mairéad and Séamus, to Niamh and Eamon, to all the nieces and nephews—his love for you was the map he followed back home.

And to his friends and neighbours—thank you for being part of the fabric he cherished.

It seems fitting, somehow, that Patrick was born on St Patrick’s Day.

But there was nothing grand or saintly about how he went about things.

He simply did the next right thing, again and again, until a life of decency took shape.

As we commend him to God’s mercy in this Funeral Mass, we also take up his example.

Show up.

Listen first.

Carry the quiet load.

Laugh when the rain is horizontal and the Micra won’t take a hill in third.

The family have asked that, in lieu of flowers, donations be made in Paddy’s name to Pieta House—an echo of his last big push for others.

And they welcome Irish flags and club colours today, a small splash of the pride

he carried in place and people.

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Paddy, thank you for every early start, every late finish, every gentle word, and every hard truth softened by that half-smile.

Thank you for the roads you left safer, and the hearts you left steadier.

We'll look for you where the land meets the Atlantic, in the shout from a sideline, in the tune that rises at closing time.

We'll keep faith with what you believed—that loyalty binds, that honesty frees, and that community held in common can carry us when our own legs are tired.

May the Lord receive you in peace.

May perpetual light shine upon you.

And may we who loved you travel well on the bridges you've built, until, in God's good time, we meet again.

Go gently, Paddy.

We'll mind your own.

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