



Words from Gerard: An Ode To Family and Friends (from a pre recording with images)

Family, Family, Family. The love and friendship of many has outweighed the loneliness and heartache that you feel when your partner, father, brother, friend leaves the world suddenly. The time that family has given to me, the continual support of Suzie, the unreserved commitment when asked to help and the looking out for Ella and Lucy has been completely overwhelming. We cannot thank you enough. You are all remarkable.

Thanks to both St Patrick's College and St Alipius Primary school communities. The support, flexibility, cakes, slices, lollies, and ongoing care was so wonderful. We felt loved and cared for in the early days of such a disease like cancer. The quiet words, interest in how my health is going and the genuine joy when I got to work was crucial in supporting Suzie and I. Often actions and gifts turning up gave us a lift that we needed. I see this as such a great example of God's work in action for others. Wonderful schools, wonderful people.

My big learning has been how much others appreciate and want to tell me in person. I never thought I had lived a life that impacted upon so many, some spanning back 30 plus years, only to seek me out when I was unwell and say, act and give me their love and concern. It has made me a better person. I have lived the last days of my life more fully conscious of life around me. In short, I would urge all to live in the Now, cherish each moment, not always easy to do. When you are taking things too seriously, get over yourself and appreciate the other. I am so much more aware of others and what I can offer the other person. To truly look upon the other person, to really see the other is a real gift.

Putting our time into relationships with our children was invaluable. Our girls have the resilience for life's ups and downs. They are strong, loving, caring and special people who we love so much. We are so very proud of who they are and their values of how to treat others. There are many family and friends here today who also have contributed so much to their lives already, so thank you.

To my two Chickadees; believe in who you are. You have so much good stuff, it runs deep and strong through your heart and mind. Use it and feed it for the rest of your lives. You can change the world one conversation at a time. Share yourself with others. You both have so much to give. Give it.

The deep, abiding sadness as you realise that your father is no longer there for you is a great fear and struggle for me. I have found this the hardest to bear, leaving Suzie and the girls. I know of the loss that Ella and Lucinda will feel in a way that no one else will understand. My three brothers and Dad lived through it; may our beautiful mother Marie Sullivan (RIP) be remembered today.

These two amazing young women displayed such strength and resilience through my illness. Suzie and I are so very blessed to have daughters who have been able to go school, pass exams, keep following the normal day to day events, do more around the house, no longer able to play tennis, bike ride, go out for the day; all the things we take for granted. They forgive their father when he is moody, when he is rarely wrong, laughed at his great jokes (yes, I still have the gift of humour) or as Carlton rises to the next AFL Grand Final. At the end of the day all Suzie and I can give them is empathy and kindness and belief in themselves. We have a sea of empathy and kindness gathered here today so my family, particularly Suzie and the girls, thank you for all you have done for us in our lives and whatever the future holds.

I loved Suzie completely and fully as I humanly could. I have never experienced someone who loves and forgives as Suzie does each day, no matter how tired or scared she might be. Suzie has been the rock of this family, doing more as I am able to do less, holding the girls close, ensuring that the girls know and pray to God. Suzie often will bring something home for me, thinking about my comfort and how my days can be better. Each wishing of a good night's sleep Suzie fills me with so much love, no matter how the day has been, and I feel the love emptying all around me, overflowing into me, giving me all the strength that I need to get through another night of rest and sleep. This is a time that I feel closest to God, drawn forward always by Suzie, who charts the journey with God by our side as a constant reminder that the ultimate reality of this world is to be transcended as we are all part of a bigger plan in the world.

My life has been a full and honest one, and I thank you all for staying the journey of friendship and being a part of my family. I could not be the person I am without walking some of the way with you, however long ago or just last week.

Community and being 'something bigger' counts a great deal in the world. Thank you all for being 'something bigger' in my life and helping me to live my life as best as I can. I love all you have done for us and I love you.

Mary Oliver expresses In Blackwater Woods:

"To live in this world you must be able to do three things:

- To love what is mortal;
- To hold it against your bones knowing your own life depends on it;
- And, when the time comes to let it go, to let it go."