

Welcome. Thank you all for sharing this moment of reflection with us.

Diana would not have wanted this ceremony. She wasn't fond of funerals, nor the idea of death. She was all about life. She shunned black while displaying colour to light up people's lives with energy and good vibes.

Yet, she was practical and did not want a fuss.

"Throw me in a pit", "Chuck me on the bonfire and light a match" were the kind of admonishments she would issue. She wanted no ceremony to be invested in her.

She was clued in to the realities of life and death: "dust to dust, ashes to ashes".

And she knew everything is connected as one and that that would not change.

So yes, her spirit continues to reverberate in the universe.

And this occasion is for us more than for her, because there is suddenly a big hole in our lives and hearts which we must fill with memories of her sparkle and love. It is a chance for us to show our admiration and respect, even though it contradicts her worthy admonition.

I hope I won't blub too much but if I do please forgive me as I share a story and a few thoughts about Mum.

A long time ago,

in a deeply troubled era, by coincidence on the day the Irish Constitution was promulgated, Diana was born to a good Christian family in a land that traced its culture directly back to the Apostolic Roman church of St Paul ...

The country of her birth offers a deep, magical history, including the oldest free standing megaliths in the world. And Malta, like Ireland, suffered centuries of colonisation and perhaps that's why it also shares a welcoming community culture.

Mum certainly shared that.

Diana's ancestry includes some interesting characters like Guiseppe Cali, whose paintings adorn many churches and galleries.

And her industrialist, philanthropist grandfather Anthony Cassar Torregiani.

Born in a house in Windsor Terrace, Sliema, (which she visited last month) the family moved to St Julians after a few years, by which time she and her elder sister, Greta, had been joined by a brother, Stephen. Diana attended the Sacred Heart Catholic School excelling in art and becoming Captain of Sports.

As a teenager her portraiture already excelled.

She finished school in Lausanne becoming a Cordon Bleu chef and an accomplished tailor, whose work has been mistaken for Chanel and Christian Dior.

Her impact on fashion extended further when she supported the introduction of the bikini to Malta, apparently with complimentary commentary from Desmond Morris!

In the late 1950s she visited Ireland where she lived with the Kerr family in Kildare and picked up tips from trainer Bertie. Her talent for spotting horses continued through life as did her friendship with the Kerrs.

But, unfortunately, she picked up TB ... which she beat. After recuperating at William Hill's beach house in Jamaica she returned to Europe, where her talents and beauty attracted the demand of fashion houses like Ferragamo for modelling and continued to attract suitors. But none made the grade.

Until, one day her brother came home with a friend, a pale Anglo-Irish accountant ...

I believe his manners, honesty and faith appealed immediately. Whatever happened, it was magic and it hasn't stopped ...

Her choice of life partner caused some consternation... as he was from the other church which, at the time, was taboo.

Both their parents resisted, but where love flows, connections form and bridges are built.

Their love won over traditions and for over sixty years they have stood together in spirit and faith. This is a testament to their character.

I'm grateful they formed that unbroken bond. How lucky I have been! Thank you for that choice Mum (because I think she was the chooser) and to both Mum and Dad for a wonderful life.

Children followed ...

In the good old days...

Children were to be seen and not heard. Both my parents and many of their peers suffered that world to differing degrees, but Mum was always

a people person and a tactile one. Fortunately she broke that “no touching” rule and we got lots of hugs even from Dad! (It was part of the deal and he enjoyed the new rules even when wearing a suit.) The barriers were broken and, shock horror, we even enjoyed rough and tumble with Dad, thanks to her loving influence - something that probably hadn’t happened in the family ever before! So nowadays you can expect a hug from her family. Watch out! You might enjoy it.

Mum had a deep affection for and love of children.

From a young age she knew she wanted a family, and once her own children had grown she continued to nurture young people beyond her front door, not least her grandchildren. Though busy with her own ventures she would appear within a day or two of a grandchild being born to offer help to their mother, even if the baby arrived a month early!

And thousands of people might attribute a degree of “motherliness” to her because she has helped so many young people in Asia and Africa find opportunities with a Pestalozzian education of “head heart and hands”. The connection she had with all these scholars can be seen in the comments of RIP.ie Truly she touched the lives of many.

Even while continuing to support the charity, her entrepreneurial energy flourished as she established a kindergarten at her home in London which ran for many years and whose graduates (aged 4 or 5 at the time) still remember her fondly.

She always offered a smiling welcome to all children.

She knew how to love all, and she did so.

Her legacy is all of us and those other children not here who have been touched by her light and love.

We all share some of that joy and love of life with others.

And one day our lives were thrown upside down, when Mum went tip over toes down some dark stairs ...

After a deep sleep of a month she woke and began life again, from scratch. That’s not easy. You’ve got to be tough and determined to learn to walk and talk in your 60s! And she did it. With a smile. Tough but gentle. Some might call her an angel. Well I’m glad Dad got her back and I’m grateful for those who helped her come back, especially my sister Anne.

And so she continued to share her light and love for another quarter century. Continued to support the children of PestalozziWorld. Continued to support her partner on their mission.

She made a home in Ireland and a home in Gozo where you can see her eye for aesthetics in house and garden.

She was an artist, sports player, wife, mother, grandmother, builder, handyman, housekeeper, home-maker, fashion model, fashion designer, teacher, a faithful nurturer of all, who brought light and love in to our lives.

And she was modest, giving everything away during her life.

But who was she?

I think she was a mother.

When people ask “where do you come from?” what do you say?

I usually respond “from my mother!” We are all connected to our mother in a deep way because they bring us in to this world and nurture us for years until we can become more independent. As we are all from our mother, we are all brothers and sisters, and that is how Diana saw the world. She knew everybody is the same. She had her feet on the ground and treated everyone with directness, honesty, generosity and love.

Like all good mothers her natural talents were touch and talk. Touch and talk have been so neglected by our traditional culture, but are now known to be critical to human development. As we’ve heard, and maybe felt, Diana was a tactile operator and that hugging habit always brought people together.

And motivated by the light from within, she knew that expression matters and she would “talk to anyone”. And she did!

Always with the same engaging manner. Always direct, honest and interested.

Especially children. She treated children of all ages with directness and compassion.

She continued always to remind me ...

“Tom, don’t forget to brush your teeth and hair. Remember to say your prayers.”

She was a free thinker. She enjoyed life from many perspectives and shone in many roles, so her wisdom and natural intuition was worth following.

Many here, and many who are not, will feel a gap in their life, in their heart. That is a legacy of Diana because she shared her life and heart with all.

She touched so many of us with her down to earth manner, direct approach, honesty, generosity and love.

She was a faithful spirit and believed that we are all connected, all part of the same nature, all part of one universe. And she treated all people, high or low, the same.

She died as she wanted to: quickly, on her feet, working in fact to clean the house for guests. No hanging about. No lollygagging!

We are sad because we have lost her.

But we can enjoy her memory and influence and be happy that she enjoyed life to the end!

Long live her light and love.

---