

In 1997 the children had left home, we became empty nesters. We bought a house in Kensington. We were about to move into the area. We were looking for a church.



*Terry Monagle*

I drove over from Surrey Hills one Sunday morning. I was there to suss out the place out. Some churches feel sterile, others full of comfort and reassurance. Some feel as though something bad has happened there. Others feel blessed.

It is the latter feeling that came to me the first time I walked into Holy Rosary.

I chatted in the aisle to Mick Mulcahy after Mass. It was instantaneous. He'd do me.

The wonderful feeling in the church comes I believe from the holiness of the people. I am thinking predominantly of the older people in the parish. People in their sixties, seventies and eighties. These are people who have suffered much, who have lived lives of resilient love, who now seem to have their egoism pretty much burned away and they have blossomed into people vibrant with love, wisdom and joy. They are still sharing the sufferings of the world, though their own personal sufferings are predominantly physical now. However they are still very active in works of love and prayer.

They won't recognise themselves in these high faluting words. Over many decades they built a rich and vibrant community. Those days are rapidly passing.

The church itself is physically beautiful. In the mornings when the sun is up a lovely cream and

green light flows through the bottom level windows into the church. It is a comforting light.

While up high on the southern side a beautiful range of colours across the spectrum from pink, mauve, red and burgundy are projected by the stained glass windows.

I think the place could be more beautiful. It could have more colour. I think that a painting should be restored to the space up above the altar. There was one there originally, but was perhaps painted over. Also the light fittings are pretty dreadful. I know these are costs but the place could do with a bit of livening up.

I have enjoyed many of the 9 am weekday Masses. Up behind the altar are gathered some powerful prayers. People experienced in suffering and loving. These are people whose prayers are strong enough to turn around missiles. At the peace greeting everyone shakes everyone else's hand, except for Bill McLennan, who scandalously gives every woman an enthusiastic kiss. There is a laughter and a joy on every face which points towards the impossibly deep joy which resides in God. It is a delightful taste.

These people are inured to suffering. They carry it in their ageing bodies. My three-year-old niece does not accept suffering as normal. On one dim winter evening we knelt with her brother up near the crucifix that hangs on the right hand wall. She and her brother were absorbed in all the unfamiliar icons in the church. He was most interested in the brutal nails that attach Christ's limbs to the cross. The niece turned to me and asked, Why doesn't the mummy didn't pull the nails out?

We have here an experience of a rich, small and warm worshipping community. Relationships here are full of the sharing of suffering and a powerful loving. The Eucharist expresses and propels our sense of being gathered in a place made holy by loving. We have too much to lose by being bluffed into abandoning a community that evidences the value of the Christian claims. It feels like a fluke. I will be ever grateful for the sense of Christian community we have found here.

We'll clutch it while it lasts.