

Writers, poets and religious at funeral of Kerry writer

Anne Lucey in Killarney

No one who stood in front of the writer and philosopher John Moriarty felt diminished or rejected, his friend Father Pat Moore told the hundreds who gathered yesterday for the writer's funeral Mass at St Mary's Cathedral in Killarney, Co Kerry.

Moriarty, whose writing was often said to be difficult to understand, "embodied kindness", and the warmth of his welcome was unmistakable, said Father Moore, one of 14 priests from Clifden, Galway, Glenstal Abbey, Maynooth and Killarney who were on the altar.

As in the reading from the Gospel of St Luke, Moriarty had returned eventually to his native Kerry, and his spirit was in touch with the unique place where he found himself (the foot of Mangerton Mountain), and there he wrote and thought.

"Do any of us know anyone like John Moriarty?" Father Moore asked. In him, the hidden mind of Ireland had come into dialogue with the modern world, and he had spoken of things that had not yet occurred, but which almost certainly would "when the saturation we are now immersed in dries up".

"John was a mystic, because a mystic has a singular obsession with God," Father Moore said.

Choirs from the cathedral, from St John's Church in Tralee and from Siamsa Tire, conducted by Father Pat Ahern, a native of Moriarty's village of Moyvane, along with two soloists and a flautist, contributed to the Mass, which included music by Seán Ó Riada, hymns and prayers in Irish, Latin and English, and a prayer by John Henry Newman.

Father Declan O'Connor, parish priest of Killarney and chief celebrant, said that the liturgy was "very much as John requested - very simple, profound and prayerful".

Among the mourners were the Bishop of Kerry, Dr Bill Murphy; Glenstal monk and writer Mark Patrick Hederman; broadcaster Micheál Ó Muircheartaigh; the chairman of the Kerry county board, Seán Walsh; Kerry Group chief executive Hugh Friel; writer John O'Donoghue, poets Paul Durcan, Gabriel Fitzmaurice and Moya Cannon; and his publisher, Antony Farrell, of Lilliput Press.

They were joined by other writers, journalists, friends, neighbours and family. Also present was the writer Father Seán Ó Duinn, a monk of Glenstal, who helped to concelebrate the Mass.

Moriarty, the author of eight published books, died on Friday aged 69 after a long battle with cancer.

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