



IN LOVING MEMORY

# In Loving Memory of Kathleen Mary O'Brien

4th September 1967 – 31st October 2024

*Nurse, Mother, Parish Heart*





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Kathleen Mary O'Brien was born on 4 September 1967 in Cork, the second of five children of Bridget and Seamus O'Connell. She grew up on the north side of the city, educated by the Sisters of Mercy, confirmed with the name of Teresa, and developed early the combination of warmth and directness that would define her adult life. She trained as a nurse at Cork University Hospital and moved to Coventry in 1994 when her husband Thomas O'Brien took up a post with the city council. She joined the University Hospital Coventry as a ward nurse and remained there for twenty-seven years, latterly as ward sister in the surgical unit.

In Coventry she found a second home. She became involved in St Osburg's Parish — the city's oldest Catholic church — volunteering for the First Holy Communion programme, singing in the choir with increasing unreliability as her work shifts changed, and organising the annual parish supper with brisk and cheerful efficiency. Her colleagues on the ward knew her as the nurse who remembered birthdays, brought homemade soda bread on night shifts, and somehow always knew when a junior needed a quiet word. Her patients knew her as the one who did not flinch.

Kathleen was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in early 2024. She faced it with a practicality that was entirely her own — she sorted her affairs, wrote letters to her children for milestones she would not reach, and continued to read, bake and argue about Gaelic football until she

could not. She died at home on 31 October 2024, surrounded by Thomas, her daughter Aoife, and her son Ciarán. She was 57. She is missed beyond measure.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### **Kathleen O'Brien — Funeral Details**

yasin · 7 June 2026

It is with broken hearts that Thomas, Ciarán and Aoife announce the passing of Kathleen Mary O'Brien on 31 October 2024, after an illness borne with extraordinary courage and grace. The Requiem Mass will be celebrated at St Osburg's Catholic Church, Coventry. Reception of the body the evening prior. Burial at London Road Cemetery. Please be prompt

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## EVENT

# Requiem Mass

yasin · 7 June 2026

**When:** 6 November 2024, 11:00am — 6 November 2024, 12:30pm

**Where:** St Osburg's Catholic Church, Upper Well Street, Coventry, CV1 4AP

The Requiem Mass for Kathleen Mary O'Brien will be celebrated by Fr Declan Murphy. The family invite all friends, former colleagues and parishioners to attend.



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EVENT

## Wake — All Welcome

yasin · 7 June 2026

**When:** 6 July 2026, 2:00pm — 6 July 2026, 6:00pm

**Where:** St Osburg's Parish Hall, Upper Well Street, Coventry, CV1 4AP

The family invite everyone to join them for a celebration of Kathleen's life following the burial. There will be food, drink, and inevitably some singing. Kathleen would have wanted it that way.

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## EULOGY

### **My Sister**

Siobhan O'Connell · 7 June 2026

Kathleen was the person in our family who made things happen. Not noisily — she was not a noisy person — but with a steady, cheerful determination that meant things got done, problems got solved, and anyone who was struggling found themselves somehow sorted without quite knowing when she had managed it.

She chose nursing at seventeen and never doubted it. She used to say that people were at their most honest when they were frightened or in pain, and that was where she liked to be — not because she enjoyed their suffering but because she felt she could do something real there. I think that was true. I also think she chose it because she could not bear to be in a job where she was not genuinely needed.

She came to terms with her diagnosis in a way none of us managed. We were angry and she was not. She said she'd had a very good go and didn't much see the point of spending the time she had left being cross. She wrote letters to Thomas and the children. She organised her filing. She baked a Christmas cake in September because she wasn't sure she'd manage it in December. She did manage it. We ate it at the wake.

I am so glad she was my sister.

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## MEMORY

# The Christmas Cake

Siobhan O'Connell · 7 June 2026

She baked a Christmas cake every year from the same recipe she got from Mam, written in Mam's handwriting on a piece of lined paper that had been folded and unfolded a thousand times. She kept it in a little plastic sleeve now because the paper was getting fragile. She baked the one that was served at the wake in September, when she was still well enough to stand for an hour. She said she wanted it to be a good one. It was the best one she ever made.



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MEMORY

## Night Shifts

Patrick Flanagan · 7 June 2026

I worked with Kathleen for eleven years on the surgical ward and I would not have lasted the first two without her. She had a way of managing the ward at three in the morning — everything slightly difficult at that hour — that was absolutely calm without being cold. She knew every patient by name within hours of their admission. She remembered who had family coming in the morning and who did not, and she adjusted accordingly. She brought soda bread on nights. It was an act of mercy.

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## MEMORY

# The Choir

Margaret Walsh · 7 June 2026

Kathleen joined the St Osburg's choir in 2001 and immediately became the most unreliable soprano we have ever had, because of her shifts, and simultaneously one we could not imagine being without. She had a slightly rough voice, which she knew, and it did not concern her in the least. She sang like she meant it. When the choir sang at the Requiem on Wednesday, we all felt her absence acutely. The second soprano section was very quiet.



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## MEMORY

### **The Communion Preparation Classes**

Margaret Walsh · 7 June 2026

Kathleen ran the First Holy Communion preparation classes for almost fifteen years. She had a particular gift for explaining things to seven-year-olds without being condescending, which is harder than it sounds. She used a lot of biscuits as teaching aids. One year a small boy asked her why God allowed suffering and she answered him properly, seriously, without blinking — and then gave him two extra biscuits for asking.

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## CONDOLENCE

### **From the Surgical Ward, University Hospital Coventry**

Patrick Flanagan · 7 June 2026

We are heartbroken. Kathleen shaped this ward over twenty-seven years, not through authority but through example. She set a standard of care — for patients, for colleagues, for everyone she worked alongside — that we will spend the rest of our careers trying to maintain. We send all our love to Thomas, Ciarán and Aoife.

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## CONDOLENCE

### **From a Neighbour on Kenilworth Road**

Miriam Katz · 7 June 2026

I live two doors down and I have known Kathleen since they moved in. She brought us a casserole the week we arrived. She remembered my husband's name and mine. She brought Christmas cards every year, proper ones with a handwritten note. She was the kind of neighbour who makes you feel settled in a place, and those people are rarer than they should be. I will miss seeing her light on in the mornings. Our thoughts are with the family.

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## PRAYER

### **Eternal Rest**

Siobhan O'Connell · 7 June 2026

Eternal rest grant unto Kathleen, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her. May her soul and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen. Mary, Queen of Peace, pray for her. St Teresa of Ávila, her patron, receive her.

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## MEMORY

# **She Sat With Me All Night**

7 June 2026

I am not going to put my name to this because it is private. I was a patient on the ward when Kathleen was the night sister, and I was in a very bad place, not medically but otherwise. I was frightened and I wasn't coping and she saw it. She sat with me for almost an hour in the middle of the night when she had a ward to run. She did not say anything particularly profound. She just stayed. I have never forgotten it.

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