

Reflection for Thursday 12th November 2020

Letter from 107-year-old Irish woman about fighting COVID is a
must-read

Having lost her husband, twin daughters and many friends, Nancy Stewart appreciates life's challenges.

To Anyone Who Needs a Reason to Keep Going:

My name is Nancy Stewart and I was born on the 16th of October 1913. This weekend I turn 107 years of age.

Imagine turning 107 in a world pandemic. This definitely is something very unusual even for me and all I have been through. I live in Clonard in County Meath and have lived in my home for over 83 years.

I lost my husband in a car crash in 1989, and lost my twin daughters, Margaret in 2007 to motor neurone [ALS] and Anne in 2010 to utter heartbreak of losing her sister. I've lost all my friends throughout the years, which comes with living so long on this earth. I'm very lucky to still have three daughters Kathleen, Mary, and Olive, and one son, Finian, and I have 84 grandchildren, great grandchildren, and great great grandchildren. I have faced many heart-breaking moments and also have seen many hard times in our country witnessing world wars, division in our people and numerous sad times for our nation.

I write to you today to send you my love and to offer you my prayers. We are in a very difficult time at the moment in our country, in our lives and in our world. But I reach out to you in this letter to offer you hope, faith and belief that everything will be OK in the end. We are in another stage of this battle against the virus but we will get through this. Like everything I've been through since the day I was born in 1913, no matter how bad things have got, I'm the living proof that we can survive and in years to come, this will just be a distant memory.

I have a great faith and it has helped me keep positive throughout the struggles I've met. I thank you for keeping your faith and for keeping your resilience strong, through this hard time. Sadly for the moment, we can no longer stretch out to a friend and embrace them nor can we call to each other's houses.

But I'm here to share my story. I have been in lockdown in my house since March, alongside my granddaughter Louise and even though it has been a tough time, we have got through it together. We drink tea. We say prayers. We bake. We laugh. We make phone calls. I can even video call lots of my family and friends and am making new friends everyday that God gives me on this earth. And that's a very important thing to say. If you are feeling low, make sure to try call someone or even go for a walk. I also ask God to help me if I'm feeling low. This is a hard time for everyone but please make sure you keep yourself well and wear your mask. If you keep healthy, your mind will stay healthy too.

Keep talking to one another. All my life I have always believed in chatting and drinking tea and saying a prayer or a decade of the rosary and it has got me through. This is our moment to keep our faith and to keep believing that everything will turn out ok.

We must try to make sure we leave nobody behind and also that we don't lose sight of each other. This is a moment for humanity to step forward to take care of the other. We must mind ourselves but we must also mind all those around us. Look up and smile even if you have your mask on. Your eyes will smile and that might be all someone needs to keep going. No good deed ever goes unnoticed so try your best to keep being good. We are not here to live for ourselves but to live for each other.

I can't believe I've made it to this age, I only feel like I'm 50, but now that I'm here, all I can say is please God I'll be here for my next birthday. We must always look forward. I can't believe I'm the oldest person in Ireland living in my own home, I don't feel that old. When God wants me, he will come take me but for now I will keep enjoying my life, I'll keep loving my family and I'll keep saying my

prayers day by day ... oh and not to forget eating lots of good wholesome food is my tip. Good food and lots of tea is my secret to a long life as well as keeping positive as best we can. We must always look forward and hope for the best.

Thank you for thinking of me in your prayers and your thoughts and I promise I will think of you in my many rosaries I say every day. Thank you so much for reading my letter also and I hope I have, in even a little way, helped you feel less alone in this moment. There is always hope and once we keep talking to one another, no day will seem empty and we can get through this together. It only takes a small candle to take away the dark and in each of us, we can be that light in the world.

This hard time will indeed pass like all the rest and all that matters is that we helped each other through.

Many blessings and much love,

Granny Nancy x

Clonard

Co Meath.

Let us ask Our Lord to help us to be inspired by these words of faith and focus on what is important in life, our family and friends and most of all our faith.

Deacon Kevin