

Jill's widower urges zero tolerance of violent acts

THE widower of murdered Jill Meagher has urged people to break the silence on violence against women.

Tom Meagher, whose wife was murdered in Australia in 2012, said small actions such as objecting to demeaning comments about women in social situations could have a huge impact.

Mr Meagher, who is working with the White Ribbon campaign to end violence against women, said it was dangerous to defend the likes of recently released convicted rapist soccer player Ched Evans, while decrying 'more violent' rapists.

Speaking on the Ray D'Arcy Show on Today FM yesterday to mark White Ribbon Day, Mr Meagher said: 'I think it's how we separate the idea of the friendly

By **Aisling Scally**

abuser and the monster. People who rush to defend people like Ched Evans might be the first people to violently condemn people like Adrian Bayley [his wife's murderer].'

'If we're talking about degrees of rape, we're discounting the pain of the victim.'

'I think it's grossly irresponsible to suggest that we can draw a difference between a "good rape" and a "bad rape",' he added.

Meanwhile, the organisers of White Ribbon Day were forced to retract claims of the number of rapes recorded last year.

The retraction came after it emerged they had overestimated the number of reported rapes almost eight-fold. Literature dis-

tributed by a PR firm at the Irish launch of the international campaign said there were 3,500 rapes recorded by the Irish authorities last year.

However, the official figure recorded by the Central Statistics Office is 451.

Last night, Carr Communications spokeswoman Orlaith McCarthy said a mistake had been made with the figures.

Carr reissued the release with the correct figures, stating: 'Violence against women is a serious problem in Ireland.'

'According to CSO statistics, there were 451 reported rapes in Ireland in 2013. The Dublin Rape Crisis Centre's Annual Report 2013, states there were 3,928 first time contacts to the national 24 hour helpline last year.'

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

Tears are the droplets of compassion that bind us

LIFE begins and ends in tears. The child is placed in his mother's arms and she weeps tears of love and unbounded joy. Creation has performed its greatest miracle and she is overwhelmed.

The sobbing spouse holds tight the hand of the person to whom he has devoted his life. She is drifting and will soon be gone. Tears trickle down his face, a sign that he is about to lose everything that makes existence worthwhile.

Tears line the human highway from cradle to grave. Wherever there is life, love, heartache or pain, you will find a trail of tears. The great occasions are submerged in them, as are those deeply personal moments when we sit alone consumed by grief or bliss.

A tear is a sign that you are human. Other life forms can express grief but none can cry. None can be so overwhelmed that their eyes express what they are experiencing inside.

Tears: a symbol of the human heart, a sign of our ability to heal and hurt, to laugh and lament. That is why we interpret the absence of tears as a mark of heartlessness.

A cold heart is one that has ceased to cry, ceased to sympathise with those steeped in sorrow.

If we are mourned with tears, it is because we, too, have cried our way through life. We have shown compassion, love, sympathy and pity. And we have done so through our tears, through those small droplets which seem to spring from the depths of the soul.

Tears are never a sign of weakness but of strength. They are a response to those things in life which prove just how extraordinary it is. To be moved by people, events, or the beauty of this earth is to understand why human life is set apart.

There is no tangible history of tears, for we cannot contain or keep them. They burst forth and then flow away just as fast. Yet, without them, we know that humanity could never have come this far.

Tears bind us together in a web of mutual affection. How many times have you stayed your hand, or indeed your tongue, in response to tears? A weeping eye is the source of mercy and compassion, of tenderness and warmth.

That is why tears invariably elicit tears. To witness a person crying, to see a visible sign of their sorrow, is to be moved where it matters. It is an appeal for empathy to which we respond with tears of our own.

Looking back across my life, I cannot erase those times when I caused others to cry. I cannot forget those

moments when my actions proved too much for them to bear.

And if I remember them in tears, it is because I now realise that mercy denied is a crime against compassion.

Nothing has greater moral force than compassion. It is to feel the pain of another even when you don't know that person. It is to stand with them in their agony, to support them in their trials.

Without compassion, human beings could not live in peace or harmony. They could not respond to the misfortunes of others as if they were their own. They could not follow the Good Samaritan to the other side of the street.

Still, there could be no compassion without tears. Enmity simply evaporates when genuine tears are spilled. And who could simply pass a person in the throes of tragedy?

Glance down the decades and you will see that the times when you reached out to others, and they to you, were bathed in tears.

The most significant occasions in life, times that will never be lost, are those when the eyes seemed to speak for the soul. That they were the best and worst of times is simply because wherever human emotion is genuinely expressed, tears are bound to flow.

Yes, the human journey is lined with tears. I can still recall the cries of my three children as they first emerged into the world.

I can still hear the quiet sobbing of my grandmother as she bid goodbye to her beloved.

SUCH occasions of love and loss highlight humanity at its height. We see people at their most vulnerable, and yet they never appear more dignified, beautiful and strong. Why that is so is simply because, in their tears, we catch sight of our own reflection.

We all know what it is to love and to feel loss, what it is to feel heartbreak and to soar towards the sun. So many of us know what it is to experience the first touch of a newborn and the lingering embrace of someone on the edge of eternity. And even if we have yet to experience those wonders, we can still empathise with those who have.

Life begins and ends in tears, for, at its best, ours is a journey of the heart. We cry because we care and because when we cease to weep, we are no longer truly alive. A dry eye is one that cannot see beyond the surface.

In tears, however, we see deep inside a person. We see them as they really are and that, in the end, is really something worth crying about.

—mark.dooley@daily@mail.ie—

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