

Bizarre behaviour of deaf stalker revealed

A STALKER stood naked in his front room and was seen by the neighbours' babysitter, a court has heard.

John McGrotty, who is deaf and dumb, inflicted an 'ongoing nightmare' on his neighbours, the McEniffs, a judge was told.

The 65-year-old threw 20 rusty nails on the McEniffs' driveway, causing three punctures to the family's car, and sprayed water through the window of the family car as they passed him, Dungloe District Court heard.

McGrotty admitted stalking mother Eimear McEniff.

The court was told that the McEniff family babysitter also saw him nude in his front room.

A sign-language interpreter relayed the court proceedings to

By Paddy Clancy

McGrotty who has sworn that he has stopped the harassment.

Garda Dermot Gallen, who took statements of complaint, told Judge Paul Kelly that he could not say why McGrotty, of St Peter's Terrace, Chapel Road, Dungloe, Co. Donegal, was stalking the family.

The garda said: 'He appeared to have a set on the McEniff family.'

Judge Kelly was told that following the original charges to which McGrotty pleaded guilty, there were up to 35 instances of alleged harassment still being considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions and court action could follow.

Future charges could include

two of the McEniff children, who are aged 11 and six, being frightened by McGrotty when he stared at one of them and raised a finger in front of another.

Judge Kelly said the family had suffered horrendously.

He added: 'It's terrible that young children on the way to school are afraid to walk past a neighbour's house. That is intolerable.'

McGrotty admitted harassing and stalking Dara and Eimear McEniff and their family at Chapel Road, Dungloe, between July 7, 2014, and December 11, 2014.

He also admitted harassing and stalking Ms McEniff between August 2013 and July 2014.

The hearing was adjourned until September 13.

Dr Mark Dooley



MORAL MATTERS

Grace truly is amazing, as the song says

THE evangelical choir sang the sublime Grace That Won't Let Go. With harmonies that soared to Heaven, and a band that played with exceptional energy, the choir raised us high. 'Grace, amazing grace,' they gently intoned, and what an experience of grace it was.

The occasion was 'Songs of Praise', an evening of music, poetry and literature to mark the Golden Jubilee of Sallnoggin-Glenageary parish in Dublin. Compered by RTE's Caroline Murphy, the event comprised a selection of hymns performed by the parish choirs, the Music Ministry of the Evangelical Church in Dún Laoghaire and a stunning recital by international soprano Niamh Murray.

As the final bars of Grace That Won't Let Go drifted away, I approached the lectern. I had been asked by parish priest Father Pádraig Gleeson to read from the writings of the late Vietnamese Cardinal Nguyen Van Thuan. In 1975, Cardinal Thuan was imprisoned for 13 years, nine of which he spent in solitary confinement, by the North Vietnamese communist government.

Simply by offering them kindness, the cardinal eventually made friends with his guards. They asked if he could teach them foreign languages and songs in Latin, which he duly did. 'I can't begin to tell you,' he wrote, 'how moving it is to be in a communist prison and hear your guard, coming down the stairs at 7am every morning, singing the Veni Creator - Come O Creator Spirit Blessed!'

As I finished reading those words, the congregation began to sing the Veni Creator. It was a most moving moment in an evening rich with emotion. We heard poetry from Gerard Manley Hopkins and Joseph Mary Plunkett, a reading of Portia's Speech from Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice, and a stirring rendition of Edward Lockton's I'll Walk Beside You by Niamh Murray.

The parish choir, elderly but ever melodic and inspiring, sang a gorgeous version of Ave Maria and a sensational Ave Verum by Mozart. Stunned by the power and elegance of Niamh Murray's delivery, our eldest looked at me in a state of shock. He simply could not believe that the human voice was capable of such range and beauty.

These were people from all backgrounds joining together to sing praise. They sang praise for the parish, for each other and for the gift of their faith. They sang praise for their church, their heritage and for their dear departed.

In a world of strangers, where people rarely gather to pay homage to the past, this was a celebration of belonging. I did not grow up in that parish and we are not resident in it. However, we choose to go there because everything about it is

authentic. The parishioners are genuinely wonderful people who see their church as something which binds the community together. Fr Gleeson is a man of deep faith and personal integrity, someone who celebrates each Mass as if it were his last. The choirs and volunteers, the various groups and contributors, work in harmony so that this place of worship will be sustained for future generations.

For them, it is all a work of love - a work that unites Earth and eternity, the living and the dead, the past and the future. There is nothing gimmicky about any of this. It is an authentic expression of faithful love in an era that has little faith and even less love.

As they sang out with praise and thanksgiving, I found myself recalling something that happened earlier that day. At the end of morning Mass, Fr Gleeson had the appalling task of having to apologise to parishioners for the sexual crimes of a former parish priest. He had never met the perpetrator and yet, as he expressed his solidarity with the victims and with his parishioners, it was obvious that Fr Gleeson felt every ounce of their torment and revulsion.

HE finished what he had to say and began the final prayer of the Mass. And then, as though crying from the Cross, his voice broke. Here was a man of deep holiness weeping in pain for the people he loves, for the church he loves, for the God he loves.

My son was serving on the altar and I could see that, like the rest of us, he could barely restrain his tears. Sometimes, the only response to sins of such magnitude, to sins that cause such pain and grief, is to cry with compassion for all who have suffered. It was a moment of amazing grace, a moment when I felt a teardrop fall from on high.

'Grace, amazing grace, greater than our past, deeper than our pain, stronger than our sin.' They sang it with such tenderness, energy and love. They sang it unaware that the people of that parish had, earlier in the day, witnessed such a supreme moment of grace. It was a fleeting moment, and yet its significance shall never be forgotten.

They came, they gathered and they sang. Young and old joined in harmony to give thanks for their great blessings.

It was something I was extremely proud to be part of, not least because these are people who, despite everything, keep alive the flame of faith. From Josie in her 90s to my little five-year-old, the generations unite to bear witness to something that we all need, deep down - a shared sense of destiny and identity.

It was a day that began in tears and ended in joy - a day when one good man showed us why amazing grace is so much more than a beautiful song.

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