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Family, friends, and all who loved Edward Patrick O’Connor—our Ted—thank you for being here today as we honour his life and remember the ways he shaped ours.

I speak as his grandson,
the one who shared Sunday dinners that always ran a little late,
long walks that always took the scenic route,
and stories that always got a little better with each telling.

Ted was born on November 30, 1933,
and he left us on April 10, 2026, at the age of 92.
Ninety-two years is a wide span for a single life,
but when you trace it the way he lived it—step by steady step—it feels both ordinary and quietly remarkable.

He arrived in Canada from Ireland in 1957,
a young man with an accent that never quite faded
and a belief that good work could build a home.
He started as a letter carrier in Calgary,
a job that suited him more than he let on—
rain, wind, snow—he walked his route and learned the names behind the addresses.
He liked that a neighbourhood could be mapped not just by streets, but by people.

Later, he opened a hardware store in Winnipeg,
and for 30 years he kept its door unlocked a few minutes early and a few minutes late.
He ran it with fairness that was not up for negotiation and kindness that was never on display.

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If you came in nervous because something at home had broken,
you left with a small bag and a clear instruction,
and often a laugh that made you feel the repair was possible after all.
He believed a good neighbour could fix almost anything,
and if you visited that counter, even once, you were his neighbour.

Ted was predeceased by his beloved Nora,
and for all the miles he walked and all the winters he met head-on,
that was the step that left the deepest mark.
He honoured her best by carrying on in the way she'd expect—
faithfully, stubbornly, and with his sleeves rolled.
He was father to four children,
grandfather to ten,
and in recent years, great-grandfather to two—
a title he took with the same seriousness he once reserved for shovelling the sidewalk before anyone else was awake.

He retired, but not in the way that means stopping.
He retired to make more room for family and for community.
He volunteered with St. Vincent de Paul and at the local food bank,
never announcing it, never tallying it,
just showing up when the doors opened and staying until the work felt properly done.
For him, faith was not about volume.
It was a habit of attention.
He kept his word. He returned phone calls. He looked you in the eye.
He taught us that hospitality is not an invitation—it's a practice.

If you're looking for big gestures,
you might miss the best of him.
Ted's life was a series of small, consistent choices:
be early,
be fair,
listen first,

lend the right tool,
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and when you can’t fix what’s broken, sit with the person who’s holding it.

He had traits we talk about at gatherings like this—resilient, fair, quietly generous.
But let me tell you how those qualities felt up close.
Resilience was the way he laced his skates at The Forks even when the wind stung and the ice groaned a little,
smiling at the rest of us as if winter had been his idea.
Fairness was the way he dealt cards—cribbage every time—and took the same rules for himself that he expected of you.
Quiet generosity was the kettle already boiling when you knocked unannounced, the extra bag of groceries he somehow “found” for the food bank when he knew a family could use it,
the envelope that appeared at Christmas for someone he claimed had “helped with the shovelling,” even when that person had never touched a shovel.

He was a born storyteller,
though he never called it that.
His stories arrived unhurried, like neighbours leaning on a fence.
They were measured in pauses and raised eyebrows,
and they improved not because the facts changed,
but because his delight in telling them grew.
On Sunday dinners, he’d finish a tale and then catch himself—“But that’s not the point”—and somehow the point always landed.

My favourite memories are winter ones.
Skating at The Forks on crisp evenings,
cheeks raw with cold, the river lit in that particular Manitoba way,
and afterwards, warmth opening like a door:
Nora’s hands on mugs, steam clouding the kitchen window,
Ted’s stew waiting like a promise,
and a cribbage board already on the table.
He’d say, “Fifteen two, fifteen four,” placing pegs with the authority of a judge

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and the twinkle of a co-conspirator.
If you tried to talk strategy, he’d wave you off—
“Just play the hand you’ve got, and keep your eyes open.”
Good advice, on more than one front.

He had hobbies we all recognized as parts of his character.
Prize tomatoes that he fussed over until they were heavy enough to impress even the neighbours who pretended not to care.
Crossword puzzles on the back porch, pencil tapping the margin like a metronome,
the satisfaction of the last square filled in without a single smudge.
Irish folk music from the old records—voices like well-worn paths—
and the Winnipeg Jets on the radio,
his patience with a rebuilding season sturdier than most coaches deserve.
And of course, cribbage—where luck met arithmetic,
and where he could be both teacher and competitor without ever making the table feel small.

What did he value?
Faith that led with action.
Fairness that didn’t bend for convenience.
Keeping one’s word even when the promise was only to show up.
Hospitality that started at the front walk and ended only when the lights went out.
And helping without fanfare—quietly, cleanly, and with a nod that said, “No fuss.”

If you spent real time with him, you knew his rituals.
Morning check-in calls—short, steady, and somehow able to cover everything.
Handwritten birthday cards, each line straight as if the page itself had been measured,
with a note that didn’t sound like anyone else’s voice but his.
And the wisdom chair—the kitchen chair, really—
the place he sat when he listened harder than he spoke,

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where he reminded you, without sermonizing, to take your time and do the next right thing.

We will miss those more than we can say without stumbling.
But there is a kind of continuity in them.
We still know the time he would have called.
We still know how the card would have looked.
We can still picture that chair and ask ourselves what he would have said before we answer too fast.

To his children—
you were the centre of his map.
He tracked your lives the way he once tracked his delivery routes:
precisely and without complaint about the weather.
To his grandchildren—
he gave us a way to stand in the world without taking up more space than we need.
To his great-grandchildren—
he was ready to cheer for your first steps as if they were miracles,
and in his absence we will cheer louder, because that is what he taught us to do for each other.

Ted had edges, of course.
He could be exacting.
He did not admire shortcuts,
and his patience for flimsy excuses was thin.
But his standards and his kindness came from the same place:
respect—for the task, for the person, for the day you've been given.
He believed that if something was worth doing, it was worth doing with your coat on,
your boots laced,
and your attention fully present.

In the months before he died,

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when walking took more effort and listening took more time,
he did not complain.
He adapted.
He moved slower, but he kept moving.
He cracked a joke when it fit, and saved his breath when it didn’t.
If you brought up the future, he would steer you gently to the present,
to the teacup in his hand,
to the pot on the stove,
to the score in the crib game that still had pegs to move.
He met his last season the way he met the first snow every year—
with acceptance, a list of sensible steps, and a plan to be useful.

There is grief here today, and there should be.
But there is also gratitude that refuses to be quiet.
Gratitude for the immigrant who made a home,
for the shopkeeper who learned the names and fixed what could be fixed,
for the husband who kept loving Nora after goodbye,
for the father who steadied a family without needing a stage,
and for the grandfather whose stories made winter feel shorter.

As we close, our family will share an Irish blessing in Ted’s honour,
words he knew and lived by in the plainest, best ways.
And because he believed that help should reach the table where it’s needed,
we welcome donations to Harvest Manitoba in lieu of flowers.

Tonight, some of us will hear the game on the radio and reach for the score without thinking.
Some of us will circle a tricky clue in the crossword and refuse to look up the answer.
Some of us will add a little extra thyme to a stew and set the cribbage board out before anyone asks.
All of us will feel, in the quiet of our kitchens,
the presence of a man who preferred to give rather than be noticed,
and who left us enough stories and enough examples to keep going.

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Thank you, Ted,
for the Sunday dinners that took their time,
for the long walks that didn’t need a destination,
for the stories that learned how to take a joke and grow a heart.

May we live the way you lived:
with faith that works,
with fairness that holds,
with hospitality that opens the door,
and with help that arrives early and leaves without a fuss.

May the road rise to meet you.
And may we meet each other on that road,
a little steadier, and a little more generous,
because you showed us how.

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