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Saturday, March 14, 2009

Constable's murder should galvanise pursuit of understanding and tolerance, mourners told



Kate Carroll (centre), Const Carroll's wife, in the procession. Photograph: David Sleator

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FIONA GARTLAND

FUNERAL MASS: THE MURDER of PSNI Constable Stephen Carroll should galvanise the community in the pursuit of mutual understanding, tolerance and respect, the congregation at his funeral was told yesterday.

In a strong homily at St Therese Church, Banbridge, Canon Liam Stevenson said Const Carroll's murder and the murder of two British soldiers at the weekend were designed to destabilise the peace process. "We will not lose the peace because so many people are so determined to move forward," he said.

He was joined on the altar by Bishop of Dromore John McAreevey. Also present were Church of Ireland Bishop Harold Millar; the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, Rt Rev Donal Patton; the President of the Methodist Church, Rev Alan Ferguson, and clergy from churches in the surrounding area.

The mourners were led by Const Carroll's wife, Kate, and son, Shane, with his sister, three brothers, mother Margaret Carroll and his grandchildren.

President Mary McAleese was represented at the service by her deputy general secretary, Lochlann Quinn. Minister for Justice Dermot Ahern attended on behalf of the Government. PSNI Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde was present, as was Garda Commissioner Fachtina Murphy.

Northern Secretary Shaun Woodward attended with Minister for Security Paul Goggins and Permanent Secretary Sir Jonathan Phillips. The British army was represented by Brig George Norton. Police Ombudsman Al Hutchinson was also present, as was Irish joint secretary Colm O'Flóinn.

Fr Stevenson said Const Carroll had been a family man and a sports lover who had held plans to work in the area of sports science after his scheduled retirement from the PSNI in 18 months.

"An attack on the PSNI is primarily an attack on the whole population of Northern Ireland," he said.

The word "patriotism" had been used and abused by many, he said, including Const Carroll's killers. But the word was robbed of its intrinsic value when it was allied with violence and death in pursuit of its objectives, he said.

"I see patriotism more in terms of the love of people and specifically here in Northern Ireland the love of all its people," Fr Stevenson told the congregation.

"Our prayer today is that Stephen's horrendous killing, whatever its intention or desired effect, will galvanise us in our pursuit of mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for one another," he said.

He prayed that the perpetrators would be brought to justice. Prayers were also said for the family and friends of Const Carroll, and for the PSNI.

Politicians from all Northern Ireland's parties attended, including MLAs Alex Maskey, John O'Dowd and councillor Dessie Ward from Sinn Féin.

SDLP representatives included its leader Mark Durkan and deputy leader Alasdair McDonnell, as well as MLAs Dolores Kelly and Alex Attwood.

Sir Reg Empey of the UUP was joined by party MLAs Danny Kennedy, George Savage, Basil McCrea and Michael McGimpsey. And Alliance party leader David Ford also attended. The DUP was represented by David Simpson MLA. Also present was UDA leader Jackie McDonald.

Sir Hugh Orde addressed the congregation and spoke of Const Carroll's "willingness, bravery and commitment". He said the constable had responded to a call for help knowing he was going to a location where people had tried to hurt officers in the past.

Addressing Const Carroll's widow, he said: "He will not be forgotten, Kate, I promise you that."

Bishop John McAreevey directly addressed supporters of the killing, saying their thinking was backward.

"The people of Ireland and Britain have chosen a better way forward, the way of reconciliation and accommodation. We are determined not to allow ourselves to be dragged back into the morass of hatred and violence," he said.

This article appears in the print edition of the Irish Times

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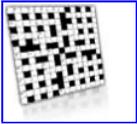
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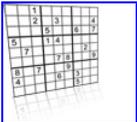
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