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A Tribute to the grace of God in the life of Mrs Jacqueline Johnston

Given at her funeral service in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church, by her former minister, Rev Ivan Foster, 16th February 2016.

"Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings," Isaiah 3:10.

Mrs Jacqueline Johnston (née Beattie) was born on 2nd August, 1947 in the townland of Killymoonan, near Fintona, Co. Tyrone. She began her school life in Tullyrush Primary School in the village of Seskinore and then progressed to Omagh High School.

For a career, she entered nursing and she trained in the Mid-Ulster Hospital, Magherafelt from 1966 until 1969. When qualified, she moved for a time to the Ulster Hospital, Dundonald and as well nursed in the old Erne Hospital, Enniskillen. She also worked for a time in Clogher Old Folks' Home.

She married Jimmy Johnston in Seskinore Presbyterian Church on 1st April, 1975. Shortly after their wedding they set up home in Irvinestown. In 1977 she welcomed her first son, Lyndon, then her daughter Deborah, her second son Neil and her youngest, Matthew.

The most important event for Jimmy and Jacqueline took place in 1979. For it was in that year they were converted. It is also the year Deborah was born. I dedicated Deborah on 27th May 1979. I had spoken to Jimmy and Jacqueline about the solemn nature of the promises that they would be taking as parents at the dedication and their trusting Christ as their Saviour stemmed from that conversation.

When her family was grown, Mrs Johnston still was anxious to help others. She was engaged in child-minding up until her ill-health made it impossible. Of course, she nursed Jimmy who suffered from diabetes and then after Jimmy's death, she was called upon to nurse Neil and care for him through his difficult time following a car accident.

In her times of ill-health and times of difficulty, her sister Helen often hastened down from Lisburn to help her and the family.

When our text says that the righteous "shall eat the fruit of their doings" we have it explained in the experiences of Mrs Johnston. She who nursed many others was herself kindly nursed in her final months.

I spoke on Isaiah 3:10 at the funeral of Jimmy almost 21 years ago. Today, I refer to it again as I speak a few words of tribute to the grace of God manifested in the life Mrs Jacqueline Johnston.

At my last visit with her in hospital, on Friday February 5th, as I was leaving I felt constrained to take her hand and speak a few words regarding how long we had been friends and of our common faith in the Saviour. I don't know why I felt moved to speak so, since she looked as well as I had ever seen her in recent weeks.

I am glad now that I did.

She was a long-time friend.

I have known Mrs Johnston since the late 1970s for her parents, Mr and Mrs William Beattie, were members of our Omagh church.

When her mother was widowed she moved to Irvinestown to be near her daughter and attended Kilskeery Free Presbyterian church, where Jimmy and Jacqueline were already in membership.



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She was a loving wife and mother.

Many times her nursing skill was called upon because of Jimmy's diabetes. She bore the burden of a widow with a young family most courageously and saw them educated and settled. We saw her motherly love and kindness especially during Neil's time of prolonged illness.

She was a beloved sister in Christ.

Being widowed so young, there was a special place in the hearts of the people here. Widows are under God's special care. "And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart," Zechariah 7:10. Kilskeery folk acted in the spirit of that word. The congregation took her upon their hearts at the time of Jimmy's death and also through the trying period of Neil's illness following his accident.

In our prayers of late she was tenderly and lovingly referred to as "wee Ms Johnston"!

She was a faithful church member and an admired Christian.

She bore with great faith and patience her trials and of more recent times her sickness. She was admired for her determination to attend God's house as long as she could even when it meant having an oxygen tank beside her in the car and in the pew!

We salute her memory and we will miss her greatly. I am sure I speak on behalf of all, especially Mrs Thompson, who travelled with her to God's house so often.

May the Lord bless the family through the memory of the faithful, loving witness of this gentle and good and godly woman.