BAPTISM SPEECH

FOR

DESMOND KEOGH

Hello everyone!! Cristina and I want to thank all of you for being here to share this precious moment-the baptism of our beautiful fifth child, Valentina Kitty Keogh. Today is a day of togetherness, celebration, and acknowledgement of the importance of family, faith, honoring heritage and expressing hopes and intentions for the future. Valentina is just a four-month-old baby, but as we witness her passage through the baptismal waters, we are inspired to think, to dream, to plan. Someone once said that a baby is the embodiment of possibility. I know that if Valentina could register that concept, she would be happy in knowing that she is the connection from the past to the future. She is the nexus of her family ties. She is so fortunate to have deep roots planted around the world and although we know how blessed and grateful we are for our family, this day and this ceremony reignites the spark of commitment and connection to God and to each other.

Valentina has really made strides so far. **(If you want** **to make a joke you can say**) Boy, she’s achieved so much in four months… we’re **REALLY** going to expect **BIG** things from her by the time she’s a year old!! No pressure Valentina!! (**And wait for the laugh**). Can you imagine? She’s our fifth child!! She has three incredible older brothers, Tommy, Milo and Jack, and one spectacular eight-year-old big sister, Georgina, who has been over the moon with excitement, most importantly to finally be a big sister to someone… (**If you want to** **make a joke you can say with exaggeration**)… **ANYONE!!** (**And wait for the** **laugh**) … Georgina, you now have a great little sister, new future best friend, and teammate for life! Valentina has the incredible distinction of being the 22nd grandchild of my parents, Kitty and Tommy Keogh, and the 10th grandchild of Cristina’s parents, Lia and Felix. Our combined heritage should find Valentina dancing jigs in Ireland, learning the ways of the tango in Argentina, and spicing up a peppery tarantella while in Italy. In this day and age when we find the world getting smaller and smaller, it’s incredible to see so much of its diverse beauty and culture in our baby’s eyes. And while we’re at it, may she follow in her mother’s beautiful and very stylish footsteps as she conquers the world!

Those of you here today know us very well, and so you know that to us family is everything. We believe in and are strengthened by our religion and our connection to each other and to our faith. We honor the meaning of having godparents and for Valentina we made wise, loving, excellent choices. I would like to acknowledge my sister Fionnuala (**Spelling? In the email it is Finnoula**) who has traveled all the way from Ireland with her daughter, our niece, Emily. As a person and as my sister, she is an inspiration. Finnoula has demonstrated her diligence and positivity. She has taken adversity and learned from it and has found the way to give back to her community. From developing diabetes as a youngster, she was inspired to become a nurse. Her dedication to her work has seen her become a counselor for terminally ill people and she has an undeniable way of comforting those in need. Valentina, I know you’re probably more distracted by (**If you want to make a joke you can say**) your binky (**or toy… or toes…)** to concentrate on what I’m saying right now, but trust me on this one. Your Aunt Finnoula will be a wonderful God Mother… and you can thank us later! (**Wait for** **the laugh**). Be inspired by Finnoula’s depth of perseverance, her empathy, kindness, her strength and love.

When we thought of the other qualities in a person we would want to guide, inspire and protect our youngest daughter, Cristina and I wanted someone with a passion for learning, literary prowess… the ability to be a polyglot… I know… I make it sound like it’s a bad thing… (**Wait for the laugh**) but it’s amazing to be able to be tri-lingual… Valentina, can you imagine being able to speak to us in English, Spanish AND Italian? What a gift!! … And all the while being an incredible cook, a “political conservative,” … **NOT!!** …and a true appreciator of all things Argentinean, and based on those well defined criteria, the clear choice for best God Father was, is and always will be, Cristina’s brother Marcello…. a true and modern Renaissance man… Professor of English Literature, qualified chef and trusted sommelier, avid fisherman, fanatic tennis player, a man who lives and loves life with an irreverent and magnetic personality and a fascinating lifestyle… Oh… there’s just one thing I must warn you, Valentina, and I hope you remember this… you’re probably going to have to help him with his golf swing… yes, even **YOU** are probably better!! (**Wait for the laugh**). (**If you want to add a joke you** **can say**) Hey Marcello, we love you, you’re brilliant… but please don’t take a swing at me!! (**Wait for the laugh**)

Valentina, we wish for you the richest and most fulfilling life anyone might ever imagine. You’re one of our precious jewels and you mean so much to everyone here who loves you….. and to those who aren’t here today but are always with you and watching over you from their home… which is your home too. What a gift to really be a child of the world!! As you grow up you will learn what it means to have a home in places all over the world. Your grandparents Lia and Felix will show you the traditions and way of life in Argentina. Your grandpa Felix is so proud of his Argentinean roots and can’t wait to share his knowledge with you. (**If you want to make a joke you can say**) and wait until you’re old enough to try steak!! Wow!! (**And wait for the laugh**). You’ll get to visit Ireland often to visit your grandparents Kitty and Tommy and you’ll discover your connections and heritage as you play and learn from all of those cousins! You’ll travel to Italy and visit the village where your Mommy and I were married, the hometown of your grandma Lia, where you’ll see what’s it’s like to live in the beautiful Italian countryside. The town is called Pietraferrazzana. It’s a town in a region called Abbruzzo. Of course you’re just a baby now, but we all know I’ve got high hopes for you and I **WILL** be expecting you to be able to find all of these spots on a map… and spell them by the time you’re two… No pressure!!! Speak to your God Father Uncle Marcello…he’ll help!! (**Wait for the laugh**)

Most of all you’ve got 3 brothers and a sister who will be by your side through thick and thin. Although there’s a bit of an age gap between you and Tommy, Milo, and Jack and they may spend most of their time running off with their friends focused on their own pursuits and interests, I promise you, if they’re smart… really, **REALLY** smart… they’ll stay on your good side and keep you in the loop. Let’s face it, in about 15 or so years, when they’re almost ready to start their own families, they’re going to realize they’ve got a built in baby sitter… In you!!! So they better be nice!! (**Wait for the laugh**). You will also learn as you grow up, that our family loves culture and the arts and in particular music and dance. Your sister Georgina is showing great promise and interest and we just know this will be a wonderful influence and inspiration for you…. so keep practicing that kicking!! (**Wait for the laugh**)

Before I speak any longer and risk putting you to sleep …I’m talking to **YOU**, Valentina (**Wait for the laugh**) I’d like to invite everyone to raise a glass as I propose a toast: In honor of my parents who couldn’t be here and might be a little busy with their other dozens of grandchildren, and with gratefulness and appreciation of our newest blessing, I’d like to share an Irish proverb:

May you live a long life

 Full of gladness and health,

With a pocket full of gold

As the least of your wealth.

May the dreams you hold dearest,

Be those which come true,

The kindness you spread,

Keep returning to you.

Here’s to our adorable Valentina. May you live a long life filled with health and happiness, prosperity, faith, and always family and friends by your side. May the lessons you learn guide you to a rich, diverse and happy life. We love you. Thank you all!