

Acclaimed author says Limerick will be his final resting place



Back where it all began: Frank McCourt in Limerick city, which he praises extravagantly in the Leader interview. See page 8

Scatter my ashes on the Shannon when I go, says Frank McCourt

By ANNE SHERIDAN

LIMERICK author Frank McCourt has revealed that he would like his ashes to be scattered over the River Shannon when he dies.

In this week's Leader interview, the 77 year-old Pulitzer Prize winner and New York resident says: "I wouldn't like to be incapacitated, or handicapped, or die of a slow disease. I don't want to be beholden to anyone or have anyone wiping my mouth if I'm drooling. I'd just like to go. I don't want funeral services or memorials. Let them scatter my ashes over the Shannon and pollute the river."

The author went on to say: "I shouldn't be here. I should have worms crawling up my nose." However, the septuagenarian and teacher of 30 years now feels he has a moral obligation towards society.

"If you live past 65 you're responsible to the rest of humanity to pass on your insights, that's why you're allowed to live a little longer. So if I'm here, there's a reason I'm here," he told the Limerick Leader.

Mr McCourt was in Limerick last weekend to launch his fourth book, *Angels and the Baby Jesus*. The children's book follows the story of his mother, Angela, who aged eight, stole the Baby

Jesus from St Joseph's Church as she feared he would be cold at night.

"In a way I feel like a bit of fraud. I wrote the story, but it was a story my mother told me when I was seven. We all heard this story, sitting around the fire, in a house near a lane up by Sarsfield Barracks. I'm the author of this story, but she's the real author," he said.

When questioned if he did embellish his account of a poverty ridden childhood in *Angela's Ashes*, Mr McCourt said "every little detail didn't actually occur."

"Of course you embellish and of course, you have fill in the blank spots of conversation. I keep quoting Gore

Vidal, who said a memoir is your impression of your life.

"Nobody can argue with me, because these things happened in my family and these things happened in my head. You can't argue with that. There were things that happened to me which were beyond anyone's understanding or experience, so it's my story. They can argue as much as they like but I wouldn't dare intrude on their story," he said.

The author concluded that local people who spoke out publicly against his memoirs "had their own axes to grind," but he maintains that the "people who grew up in my generation knew what I was saying was true."