Fr James Harding SM

Feb 16, 1925 - Jul 24, 2024

James Michael Harding was born at Gerringong, NSW, on Feb 16, 1925. His parents, Frances and Jack, had four children, a daughter, then Jim, and a younger brother and sister. The family moved to Sydney where Jim was educated by the Josephite Sisters at Enfield and the Christian Brothers at Strathfield.

In 1942-43 Jim attended Sydney Teachers' College before joining the RAAF and serving as a wireless air gunner in World War II. After the war he studied medicine at Sydney University, graduating in 1952 and being appointed to the Mater Hospital, North Sydney, as a resident medical officer.

In 1954 Jim joined the Marist Fathers, making his novitiate at Armidale, NSW, before religious profession on Feb 23, 1955. After studies in philosophy and theology at St Peter Chanel's Scholasticate, Toongabbie, NSW, he was ordained on Jul 09, 1960, then appointed to Marist College, Burnie, Tas. (1961-62) followed by St Paul's College, Bellambi, NSW (1963).

In 1964 Fr Jim transferred to the Oceania Marist Province, spending a year in medical practice at Sydney's Mater Hospital and the Tropical Medical School at Sydney University where he gained a diploma in Tropical Medicine. Towards the end of 1965 he left Australia for Bougainville, PNG, where, with the help of Kiwi Brothers, Ambrose SM and William SM, he built and managed a hospital to serve the west coast of Bougainville.

After 12 years Fr Jim retired from medical work and returned to Australia to minister in the Marist parish of St Johns Wood/The Gap in Brisbane. After three years he was called back to the Pacific and appointed to the formation community at Tutu, Taveuni Island, Fiji, and then to Marist College, Suva.

Fr Jim experienced ongoing renewal programs in Dublin (1976), Pymble, NSW (1979) and Chicago (1985-86). In the course of sabbatical programs he visited the Marist places in France in the company of the Marist Missionary Sisters.

Rejoining the Australian Province, Fr Jim was appointed in 1990 to St Patrick's parish, Church Hill, Sydney, where he ministered until retiring to the Maryvale/Montbel community at Hunters Hill where he lived until 2021 when he transferred to Southern Cross Aged Care at Marsfield, NSW.

Fr Jim died peacefully at Marsfield on Jul 24, 2024, the eve of the feast of his namesake, St James, and in his 100th year, after receiving the Sacrament of the Sick and in the company of fellow Marists.

May he rest in well-deserved peace.