

## UNCLE JAMES EULOGY.

24TH AUGUST 2022

Most of you know him as Jim or Father James for me, I know him merely as Uncle James my name is Richard Ware, on behalf Uncle James and of his sole surviving sister Maureen, her son Simon and his beloved wife Kirsty and their children and their children's children, his departed brother Michael's daughters Belle, Melissa, Carmel and Cerena and their families, his departed sister Molly and her daughter Trish and her children including Maddie and his other departed brothers and sisters and their respectful families, all of you who have come here today to celebrate his life and for those afar who couldn't make it and cherish him I want to say, thank you for celebrating his life.

Uncle James was ordained and passed 2 day short of 52 years of service so I want to make mention to the Marist Fathers who are also like a family to him. Today you bury one of your own and I want to recognise you all, not only as Marist Fathers but as the men who some of you have decades old personal relationships with him and your loss that you all personally bear. So please today reach out to everyone here, as we all have been impacted by the life he lived and his relative quick departure. Thank you to all

Uncle James never lived for the future, nor did he in the past, he was unique and rare that he only lived in the present and would often say "that happen a hundred years ago". It seemed time was irrelevant to him and he was ageless, photos of him from 50 years ago look as if they were taken last month. He would often start things not knowing where it would lead him or how long it would take yet he was always fully committed to doing the best he could.

My earliest memories of Uncle James was at Christmas lunches at his mother's place in Marrickville, where he grew up. Us having Christmas Mass in her lounge room led by Uncle James always felt special. I recall back as a child at Christmas lunch he sat beside my mum, which at that time was rare, rubbing shoulders and grinning as he said "We are officially family now!"- this was even though mum married into the family almost ten years earlier. You see Pope John Paul II had recently been anointed Pope and he was Polish like my mum. With fingers crossed resting on top

of his belly and that smile full of warmth, the affection he displayed will forever be etched into my mind. I'm sure many of you know the special smile I'm talking about.

My relationship with Uncle James had walls, it was rare for us to talk about our work, it's not like they were off limits, it was more I wanted to know the person he was and I believe for him it was like a mentor role- helping me to grow emotionally and spiritually.

For a long time each February he would holiday and stay on the Gold Coast at Currumbin, during this time he would venture a little further north to Brisbane and spend a week with his brother John, my father, where each night together we would have significantly more than one bottle of red wine and attempt to solve the world's problems, as we saw it, as the wine got better the conversations tended to go deeper, and my father would nod off, sometimes Uncle James would open up a little more like, as Australian heavy weight Judo champion he qualified as an athlete to attend and represent Australia at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics so for training while in Japan he was invited to teach the Emperor's body guards what he knew about Judo. As clamorous as that sounds the reality I found out at one of our evenings was that the bodyguards half his size were throwing him around like a ragdoll, I guess in a way he was teaching them what he knew and helping them improve their martial arts.

When Uncle James was living in Japan I recall his woodworking efforts where he built a childcare centre in a rural village, as he describes it, he built a ladder attached to the outside of the house like structure for the children who now would have had access to the roof when it snowed so they could climb up the outside of the house and slide down the roof planting themselves deep into the fresh snow every day. As awesome and fun as that sounds somehow I doubt if that would pass OH&S today but he did it because they wanted it, plus it was a different era then too. He was always giving and felt uneasy when receiving anything from people in return.

If you asked him, with true motives, and, providing he could, he would do almost anything. He was excellent at reading people and understanding their true motives it was rare to get one over on Uncle James.

I recall one of the homeless people whom he helped greatly and their relationship spanned years, Uncle James knew he was, amongst other things, a thief who specialised in breaking into people's homes. Hence, he never knew where Uncle James lived but when this person heard Uncle James had moved into Leichardt he wanted to repay the help Uncle James had provided, in a way only he could. So, with Uncle James approval, he used his "unique skillset" and burglar proofed his house. For starters he drilled out the heads of all the screws holding up with window screens and security doors making it entry impossible for "people like him" to gain access. He only wanted to make sure he was safe and Uncle James knew he had the right intentions. Though it did make it immensely harder when they needed to be replaced. You see Uncle James knew the true reality of relationships but also, he trusted in the person and their character.

Many of you know him through his blessed work with the church though he was more than that, allow me to share with you another side of his life.

He was head brewer for a Sydney brewery company called Tooths Beer and one of his favourite sayings was "Tap it lightly" meaning don't be too rash or head strong, go slow.

He also was a chemist that helped to develop Nestle baby food

He spoke eight languages plus another three dead languages and he was a published author, writing many language translation books, if I recall correctly about 30 books in total.

He traced our family tree back over one thousand years.

Uncle James started researching the family tree as his father heard rumours and wanted to know if they were true I guess not long after that it took on its own life and he never thought it would take over 30 years and span that length but that is who he was, he would always see things through to the end.

Given I know all of this it's become somewhat hard now when I need to fill in medical forms about family health history. I always found it interesting the family tree highlights, though with varying long degrees of separation we're related to two Royal European families and four American Presidents but uncle James never lived in the

past and would only relate back to our family tree when we would bring these people, countries or historical events up and he would say “Oh, Do you know we are related...” it did help me out immensely though, going to a Christian school and walking past the strictest teacher who was feared by all, as he was admiring one of the schools statues and just dropping “Sir, did you know I’m related too...” when passing statues like Mary Mackillop or Scottish Philosopher Duns Scotus or when I said to the history teacher we were at the signing of the Magna Carter needless to say I could do no wrong at school after that. Thanks to Uncle James.

When I called Uncle James and asked how he is? His reply would always be “Grumpy as ever” and I knew he was ok. Sadly, I will miss those calls

Once I asked him does he have any regrets? and he said “No, not really my life has purpose and intent, though, I would have liked to have had a family.” Even though I pointed out families come in different forms like the Marist Fathers, the Church, people he is connected deeply with and their families he said “Yes, they are and I’ll be forever grateful but it’s not the same”, meaning not blood related. Realising this and in my own way with my very young family I have tried to include Uncle James in as much as possible to help fill this somewhat void for him.

Given the geographical separation and of recent, Covid, it limited personal contact between us to annual visits though we connected through calls every week, and special events, when my children would speak with him he would end the call with “I have to go now and I’m going to eat a big marshmallow for you.” Needless to say, it took the kids a little while before they realised they weren’t missing out on having a marshmallow, he was eating one for them. Then the calls evolved to “Hi Uncle James guess what? I can’t talk as I have to go and eat a marshmallow for you” he would chuckle and huff and puff. So, for the past week or so they’ve been eating marshmallows everyday as a tribute to him.

Earlier this year Uncle James rang to say “Richard, I’ve called the ambulance and it’s on its way and I’m going to hospital and I’ll be out of action until I call again.” Olivia, my daughter, was present for the call so she went home and made get well cards and wrote what a seven year old would consider a deep conversation, writing things like I will pray for you; Don’t worry about the marshmallows just get better; We

love you. And along with the traditional drawings kids would do, Olivia even made me wash and send down one of her favourite soft toys to keep him company while he recovered. I think this touched him and since then they have been writing letters back and forth to one another like pen pals and sending items of interest like Japanese coins, or Opals to my son as he's been collecting rocks and gems. So often they came home with drawings or written stories for him and I would post them off. I hope in some way this has helped filled the void he had and helped him realise he does have family and people who dearly love him for who he is.

I saw Uncle James as a person who was always fully committed to his work, though he shunned away from the limelight and preferred to work in the shadows, that way he could do the work without recognition.

He would rarely volunteered first to help, he would wait until you in some way reached out asking for it and if he could, he would, almost always give it. He helped many, many people not only in Sydney but across the globe.

I asked him why operate this way as you are so knowledgeable and can do so much, he responded by saying you can only help those who want help. The rest are taking my time away from those who I can help and make a difference with, when the others are ready and want help I will be here. I know this philosophy did rub some people the wrong way but it makes sense and also values his time.

He was a very emotionally intelligent person and knew emotions are the key drivers and influencers to one's life and would often interpret emotions through conversations to gain a better clearer understanding of what you really wanted, or needed, to say.

Today, we have all come here to celebrate Uncle James and his life, through his efforts from those here whose lives he's impacted, and those afar, he truly has made a positive difference to the world. His departure is great and he will be sadly missed. In saying this his life's work doesn't end here today it lives on in each of us, through the way he has helped us all. I ask you all to pay it forward in the spirit of Uncle James and allow his legacy to continue and evolve.