



Fr James Esler SM

03.12.1922 - 18.12.2021

James Michael Esler was born at Parkes, NSW, on Dec 3, 1922. His grandparents were Irish immigrants (Esler is a Danish – Viking name), pioneer farmers in Victoria and NSW. Their strong Catholic faith and that of his parents nurtured his vocation. Jim's father, Samuel, joined the mounted police, became a detective, then married Clare Kerin at Peak Hill, NSW. After this they went to India where Samuel was engaged to eradicate crime in the horse racing industry. On their return to Australia Jim was born and Samuel became a farmer-grazier near Tullamore, NSW. Young Jim loved life on the land, in spite of the hardships of drought and the great Depression.

At school Jim studied music (piano) under the Sisters of Mercy, then the Leaving Certificate at St Joseph's College, Hunters Hill. He studied Arts-Law at Sydney University, and worked as an articled clerk and solicitor. On weekdays he would visit St Patrick's, Church Hill. He played competition tennis and learned to play jazz. In 1950 he entered Marist Novitiate at Armidale then studied at St Peter Chanel's Scholasticate, Toongabbie, for six years.

After ordination in 1956 Fr Jim taught at the Philosophy House at Armidale for three years remained there with the SM Brothers as 'superior delegate'. He then moved to Rome where he studied Canon Law at the Gregorian University for five years and during the Second Vatican Council, completing with distinction in 1966 a doctorate on '*General Principles of Law and Analogy*'.

Returning to Australia, Fr Jim spent one year teaching at St John's College, Woodlawn, NSW, then thirty years as a seminary professor in moral theology and ethics at Toongabbie and Hunters Hill where he served for six years as superior, five of them also as vicar-provincial. For twenty-five years he was spiritual director of Catholic lawyers, and also a clerical fellow of St John's College, Sydney University.

Following a serious illness Fr Jim lost all central vision in one eye. Despite this and a range of other afflictions, he maintained an indomitable cheerfulness and keen interest in fellow-Marists, his numerous cousins and other acquaintances. In retirement years he lived at Maryvale, Hunters Hill, then Southern Cross Care, Marsfield. He died peacefully at Ryde Hospital on Dec 18, 2021, aged 99. May he rest in peace.