Canon EJ Moore

We are here to remember Jim with thanksgiving and great affection. We surround and uphold with our love and our prayers Martin and Richard, Kelly and Clare and Jim’s grandchildren Adam, Jack and Aaron. We also think today of Mona who died so recently – for Jim and Mona were a devoted couple in family life and ministry.

The readings today are the classics of how people of faith face death. Jesus recognises grief and pain – but responds with compassion and hope. Paul stirs us to defiance - defiance of the suffering and pain of this life which will be overwhelmed in the triumph of resurrection life – for God gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jim was of course completely remarkable. He was deeply influenced by Alan Buchanan, then Rector of St Marys on the Crumlin Road and famous as the ‘parachute padre’. My fond memories of Jim were of the three years between 1976 and 1979 when I worked with him as his curate. He was modest and humble. He never band-standed or made a big noise about himself. He was faithful and consistent – as clergy sometimes say he was ‘keeping on keeping on’.

Jim lived the Church of Ireland tradition of pastoral ministry - people of all sorts and conditions loved equally as the children of God - and they loved him in return. That was as evident in his 17 years in Jordanstown and Mossley as it was in Seymour Hill and Holy Trinity

I see too Jim’s instinct for innovation. That was an everyday part of his ministry - but he enshrined it in stone in the building of the circular church at St Hilda’s in Seymour Hill. Not just a round building. The church of the future would gather around the Lord’s Table on the Lord’s Day. Strange to many. To Jim it was self-evident.

We tend now to say that clergy are formed for ministry. Jim was formed for ministry in all the usual ways – prayer, study, shaping of the heart and mind.

He was also formed by his service as a military chaplain and particularly in the Parachute Regiment. Jim didn’t frighten easily. I can see that a military training which had tested the limits of his courage and physical strength also gave him an inner security in difficult moments.

Two times stand out for me.

The first occurred before I met Jim – it was the affair of the invitation issued by Jim as Secretary of the Irish Church Association to the Bishop of Ripon to preach in Belfast Cathedral in 1967. Bishop Moorman was a noted ecumenist and the invitation was used by the young Ian Paisley as a focus for fear and for threats against the Cathedral and people who might attend. Sadly the church backed down in the face of the pressure – and Jim I think felt let down. He was a life-long ecumenist both in the headline context of that controversy and at the grass roots. I remember his determination to continue to run an ecumenical meeting and prayer group in North Belfast in the 1970’s. And I remember the people who responded to his leadership and were grateful for it.

The second was of course his time in Holy Trinity Joanmount – ten years from 1970-1980. There was a sense that the Church of Ireland within God’s providence prepared itself for the coming Troubles without realising it. Arthur Butler became Bishop of Connor in 1969 – another priest of military background and a model of courageous and compassionate episcopacy. He used to say ‘No easy billets in my diocese.’ And there weren’t

In the same series of movements Jim went to Holy Trinity. There were shebeens, eight peace lines and about 800 families trying to live a normal life in the midst of daily violence – as Jim and Mona themselves did with what Jim always called ‘the two lively boys’ in the Rectory.

I was then and am now in awe of his personal courage of which I saw countless examples. There was the young hooligan with an iron bar whom Jim pursued over the steel fence around the electricity transformer. And his irritation when he drove up to a barricade of balaclava’d men during the second workers’ strike. Instead of resisting him, they parted respectfully as he approached. And the night that the loyalists shot into the upstairs windows of a Catholic family two doors from our house. Jim – half a mile away – was ready for instant action and I was asleep.

Jim was utterly faithful to God and his people. He lived the crucifixion and resurrection of his baptism – the words which we hear today in the context of this funeral service. He sacrificed himself without limit for his people. He lived the resurrection hope in the midst of the darkness and despair of difficult times. As we say our farewells to him today, we hear murmuring on the breeze ‘Well done good and faithful servant – enter into the joy of your Lord’.