

Family Reflection – “UR”

by Paul Ciesielski

Hello everyone, my name is Paul Ciesielski and I am Ron’s nephew from Indianapolis.

There’s no doubt the positive impact Ron had on the Church, his Church family and the Catholic religion itself, for that matter. Every time we come here or to another church function for Ron we are always amazed at the close relationships he had with everyone. He knew SO many people, and SO many people knew him. It’s amazing to hear about the impact Ron had here and about all of his lifelong accomplishments and contributions.

And while we all mourn the loss of Ron, I’d like to celebrate his life and to give you a brief glimpse of what he meant to us as a family.

Affectionately known to us as “UR,” short for Uncle Ron, he was a loving son, brother, brother-in-law, cousin, uncle, great uncle, and great great uncle. He always took the time for his family, many times traveling long distances for short periods of time just so he could be with his family.

Now perhaps many of you never realized the advantages of having a priest in your family. FREE weddings, FREE baptisms, and another great bonus, on certain holidays we didn’t have to go to church. We celebrated mass in our home with our personal priest.

A few of our favorite family memories:

- For 25 years, I gave UR a hard time because at my wedding he failed to say, “You may kiss the bride” creating quite an awkward moment. Should I kiss her? Can I kiss her? Where’s my cue? 25 years later when renewing our vows he quickly made up for it, almost demanding that I kiss my bride. I did.
- At a family gathering, never ask UR to say grace before a meal. He always claimed he was “off duty” and deferred to someone else.
- Never share a hotel room with UR. He had a snore that would shake a house.

- He was also dubbed as the “easiest faller asleeper.” He could fall asleep in the middle of a conversation.
- You probably didn’t know this, but UR was a semiprofessional dart thrower. Well...at least during the annual Ciesielski Thanksgiving celebrations. Along with my dad, UR won the first ever Ciesielski dart tournament, and then quickly went into retirement as the reigning undefeated champion.
- Years ago, we took a picture of UR playing Barbie’s with my kids. He had a Barbie in one hand and a book on liturgy in the other. I don’t know... maybe he didn’t really know he was playing Barbie’s. But seriously, the picture is playing on our video loop out in the Narthex.
- He loved to travel. He took many exotic trips to meet up with his traveling family, including Hong Kong, China, Dubai, Ireland, Mexico, Rome, and Germany. We recently learned his limit, though, when he sent his nephew Andy an email saying he would not be visiting him where he is stationed in Iraq.
- He loved his weekend getaways to visit his sister in Fort Wayne.
- He loved spending time with his cousin Alice.
- Words cannot express how proud his parents were the day of his ordination.
- Difficult to do and last minute at times, he would often make special arrangements to cover masses so he could be with his family.
- We have video, the 8mm reel-to-reel kind, of him “playing priest” as a young kid, long before he entered the seminary. He always knew what he was called to do with his life.
- UR’s dad, who we only called “King,” built him an altar in an extra bedroom, and a large presider’s chair for his young “pre-seminary practice sessions”.
- We were proud to be present as his family for the dedication of this church. What a proud accomplishment for all of you who worship here.
- His love for his family was evident to us through you. Last week when we began planning and talking to people, everyone knew that UR was going to a family reunion this past weekend. Over the years we’ve met so many people who have said, “Oh,

you're Ron's sister! How was his visit?" Or, "Oh, you're the police officer from Indianapolis!" Or, "Oh yeah, you're cousin Alice!" It seems he talked about us a little bit.

- My sister loved going to the 4th of July fireworks in beautiful downtown Roanoke, Indiana, with UR. He enjoyed that.
- We loved coming to the Pork and Corn Roast and the beautiful country setting here at St. Mary's.
- As a teenager, he drove my sister from his home to a church function during a snowy day. During the drive his car did a 360 spin, luckily with no damage. But he begged my sister not to tell his dad...just a normal kid not wanting to get in trouble.
- We searched frantically for documents containing UR's wishes for his funeral. Surely someone who is so focused on liturgy and its meaning would have hand-selected all of his readings, the Gospel and probably even the songs. We couldn't find anything and left it in the faithful and capable hands of all of the great presiders that will be here for the grand celebration. Then I got to thinking...what if in two weeks we find the document and it says he wanted his service in the small church with immediate family only?
- And while I hesitate to taint any professional and faithful image you have of UR, perhaps our last and greatest memory of him was this past New Year's Eve. We all stayed at a hotel to avoid driving and while in the hotel lobby playing games...okay, drinking games, UR turned to me and said, "I'm in room 226 in case I don't remember later!"

I hesitate to name anyone specifically because I know there are so many people who loved Ron, and are working tirelessly to make sure we celebrate his life in grand fashion this week. But there are a few people I do have to thank for their help and support this past week.

Father Tim Fairman from St. Theresa's in Palatine. Father, thank you for taking care of UR and for being so kind and helpful to us. We couldn't have done this without you.

Thank you, Father Jerry Jacob, who not only opened his church, but his heart. He just couldn't have been more kind and considerate to our family.

Thank you Howard Fischer, for loving Ron and for helping us through this process.

Thank you to the great people of St. Mary's for all of the hard work you have put in to preparing for this celebration.

Our heartfelt thanks to Cardinal Cupich, the entire Archdiocese of Chicago, and all of the presiders who will celebrate today and tomorrow.

And, of course, thank you Father Robert Fedek for your love, spiritual guidance and your commitment to honoring Ron. The bond you had with Father Ron was evident and we thank you for the friendship you had with him. You will always have a place in our hearts and in our family.

Thank you to each and every one of you who had a special place in Ron's heart. You were more to him than a parishioner, or a coworker or a colleague or a friend....you were his family. Rest assured that you had as big of an impact on his life as he had had on yours.

We were proud to share UR with you. Thank you for sharing Father Ron with us.

We love ya, UR!