

Julian Lucas McRandal
August 29, 2013 - August 30, 2022

Following is the eulogy delivered at the funeral of 9-year old Julian Lucas McRandal this past Saturday, September 3rd.

It was delivered by Julian's father Ryan McRandal.

Julian fought an incredibly difficult and brutal battle. A year into chemotherapy, his body had become frail, although his spirit remained strong. Following one of his last treatments, at one point, it appeared he was on the brink of death. He collapsed, limp in my arms, and while passing in and out of consciousness, the doctors connected him to an EEG to record his brain waves. Picture his little bald head with electrodes and wires all over. If you follow X-men, he looked like Professor X wearing his cerebro helmet. And then, after what seemed like an eternity...suddenly...suddenly...he bolted upright in the hospital bed. Julian looked out the window at the night skyline of New York City, and to the wonderment of the entire room, he was somehow aware that he looked like a walking power grid.

“MOMMY! DADDY! LOOK! My brain power and energy have lit the entire city!” Julian shouted with joy. And that was Julian. Flipping the darkest moment into a bright source of energy, powering light everywhere around him. Today we celebrate the gift of the 9 years of light Julian brought to this world, and we also celebrate the start of his life in heaven. So while a part of us is feeling profoundly sad because we miss him so much, I’d like you to take a second to close your eyes and imagine in your minds-eye Julian’s joyful face, smiling ear to ear, to help lift your spirits. Julian was exuberant. So much so that his body was constantly trying to catch up with his mindset. When he came into our bedroom in the mornings, he would never just say, “Hey Dad, I had a cool dream...” he would get out of bed and sprint down the hall so fast he had to stop himself on the edge of our bed so hard that it would lift him into a 45-degree handstand. Once he settled back down, he’d lean in close and say, “DAD! I had the CRAZIEST dream.” Once we were hiking, he saw something that looked like lettuce. He asked me, and I had no idea what it was, so I facetedimed our friend and plant guru, Lauren Bensal. Is this lettuce? It looks like Lettuce Julian, but it is actually something called skunk cabbage, she told him. The knowledge she gave him was exhilarating. And for many car rides, he would sit in the back, looking out the window, and suddenly scream, “DAD!” Causing me to almost get into an accident, “LOOK!!! SKUNK CABBAGE!” Julian could be thrilled by anything and everything. And he would transmit such joy that it was infectious.

Julian always loved to build things. When he was 5, I bought a cardboard iPhone that he’d constructed for five bucks – it was pretty awesome, with an array of different backdrops and YouTube movies you could watch on accompanying flipbooks, complete with a plastic screen and screen cover, etc. Encouraged by the 5-dollar fortune amassed from this transaction, he built an even more elaborate Apple laptop and tried to charge \$1000 for it. When I asked him why I shouldn’t go out and buy a full working version complete with Wi-Fi for that price, he stated enthusiastically that his was indestructible and hurled it down the stairs to prove the movie

flipbook “app” would still work. Julian loved to do things to earn money, such as house chores, loan sharking to his parents, and making wagers and bets with me -- a favorite “sure bet” of his was to consistently bet against me making my next three-pointer shot. This earned him a small fortune...What did he do with all this money? He gave it away, to his buddies, to Faith, presents, to people in need. Daisy remembers when they ended treatments at the hospital, she would want to race home to beat the traffic. As much as Julian wanted to get home, too, he wouldn't rush the important stuff. Homeless people were all over the streets near Sloan Kettering, and he never once forgot to stop and ask Daisy to give money. The homeless people never looked at Daisy. They always thanked Julian for helping them. The last time Julian left our home, he was having trouble walking, slurring his words, his balance off. While Daisy and I were getting ready, packing for the early morning hospital ride, although it was physically difficult for him, he managed to get all the arts and crafts he needed. When we told him it was time to go, he said, “Hold on! I need to keep going with this.” He very carefully constructed the perfect pink wallet, where he put all the money he had saved and left it next to Faith's bed for her to wake up to. That pink wallet for his sister was the last thing Julian made.

Julian's interest in the divine and love of God was right up there since he was a baby. He'd be inquisitive and have questions like, “is God just the God of this universe, but what if there's a multiverse?” He was beyond his years, explaining to us that at the exact time we needed to hear it most, that we shouldn't worry, “the skies above came down to love” and “we should never feed the evil dragon below the earth fear – because fear only fuels the dragon.” Like many strong Catholics, he had some non-negotiables. He always insisted on holy water in his room and having a statue of Mary by his bed. Recently, he was worried he would need to go through surgery without his Jesus doll, and so Daisy promised him she would bring it from home. Upon opening his eyes post-surgery, he asked her, “Mom, why are you here?”, “I'm here to be with you and make sure you are fine, honey” “No, mommy,” voice crescendoing to that of a Pentecostal, southern preacher, “No mummy, you're here to bring me Jesus!!” Even though I often heard folks talk about Julian like, “Man, there's just something about that kid”, it was more evident than ever in the last weeks of his life that there was something beyond his amazing character traits like his generosity and empathy; his sense of adventure; his ability to turn hard times into gratitude and light; his insatiable enthusiasm for science, nature, or for anything really; his smiles, his happy hops, the dancing (that wiggling of his butt) that made him so special. Julian had something that was transmittable without him smiling or laughing or even speaking.

You see, Julian spent the last three weeks of his life not able to utter a single word with his adorable voice, not able to smile his charming smile, and with at least one of his eyes closed almost all that time. And yet he deeply touched every person he came into contact within that period. Just to share one story from those days, a 30-year veteran of the pediatric intensive care unit, a total battle-hardened pro, who had seen it all, was so in love with Julian that she started sobbing when conveying some bad news on Julian's progress. I'm pretty sure it's a no-no for parents to console doctors while being told their child isn't going to make it. Julian had every member of the ICU in love with him without him saying a word, with just one eye open. How do you explain that? Perhaps the only explanation and certainly our strong belief is that it's something God-given, inherent, and deep within that transcends any normal form of

communication. I know that it is difficult to make sense of Julian's passing. Truth be told, I don't understand it. But I do trust there is a plan at play.

So let me share some thoughts on it. Daisy, Faith, Julian, and I lived an extraordinary journey for the past one and a half years. It was a journey that I pray no one else should have to endure. And yet, each of you, in your own way, traveled this path with us. The journey brought us all together in unexpected and beautiful ways. It was a journey of uncertainty, pain, and even relief but also joy. Inspiration. Inspiration. I have never met another human being with the courage of Julian Lucas McRandal. It was breathtaking. He waged an impossible battle with great poise, and all the while maintaining a sublime joy and love for life that showed the magnificence of the human spirit. Julian's example will give us all strength as we face our own battles in our own lives. We all prayed for a miracle, and we got it. The gift of his life and the journey that God brought us on to achieve the trust, faith, and peace we have today, is the miracle.