

For Fr Stephen  
From  
Our Lady Star of the Sea, East Preston

It is indeed a sad & and shockingly sudden demise. A truly good soul & a great loss to our parish. We are all diminished by his passing. JB

...

*We are heartbroken to learn of the passing of dear Father Stephen, a very devoted Priest & friend to us all. R&M S*

...

Remember me! A poem for my dear Fr Stephen.

Fill not your heart with pain and sorrow,  
But remember me in every tomorrow,  
Remember the joy, the laughter, the smiles,  
as I've only gone to rest a little while.  
Although my leaving causes pain and grief,  
my leaving had eased my hurt and gives me relief.  
So dry your eyes and remember me.!

None of my friends had the luxury of a priest and a dear friend like you!  
Who was always pleasant and shares thoughtful and kind messages and  
made you feel important and blessed.

Fr Stephen you have the love of our family and so you will continue to live in  
our hearts. JM

...

*Such a very exceptional man. A pleasure and an honour to have known him.  
LH*

...

Thank God he didn't suffer for too long. We will all miss him. PM

...

*Stephen - a dear friend. You may have gone but my memories of you live on.  
You are a great loss to so many you left behind but you are now a great gain  
in your new heavenly home. God bless you. With lots of love. P*

...

Father Stephen brought much wisdom and spiritual guidance that was greatly appreciated.

*Fr. Stephen sometimes referred to the book *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*. This is a quote from the book:*

*"What do we do when our hearts hurt, asked the boy?  
We wrap them with friendship, shared tears and time, till they wake hopeful  
and happy again" said the horse.*

*We loved you Fr. Stephen and will never forget you. May you rest in the peace  
of Christ. J&R C*

...

We are deeply saddened at the passing of Father Stephen, may we offer our condolences to all at the brotherhood and surviving family.

As fellow East Preston parishioners we lived very close by to Father Stephen. It was a pleasure to know him and we delighted in shared evening walks along the greensward, occasional evening meals and chats on medieval history, of which he was fond.

He will be truly missed and heaven, at least, will be a richer place for his passing.

God bless you all. M&E W-H

...

*I am deeply saddened at the news of Fr Stephen's death. He will be such a loss to us all and my sincerest condolences to you at the Abbey. To me, Fr Stephen epitomised everything I consider to be truly Christian, with his humility, kindness, wisdom and wonderful sense of fun and humour. He inspired me so much in my faith and I will miss him so so much. Thank you for lending him to us - he achieved an enormous amount for us in our parish and I am truly grateful for having the opportunity to get to know him. May he rest in peace. JB*

...

Really sad news about father Stephen. I know I haven't been long at the parish but I will miss him terribly. Being connected to the parish has become a beacon of light to me ever since I joined. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. RLC

...

*my husband, Colin, died early in July 2020, shortly before Father Stephen came to the Parish of East Preston. His kindness & words of wisdom brought me great comfort. As they continued to do so during the following three years, together with his warmth, understanding & inherent sense of humour. As a Priest he was invaluable & he became a dear friend. I shall never forget him. May he rest in peace. B*

...

What a short but lasting friendship we've had. Hopefully, you are being well looked after.

You are in our thoughts and prayers. God bless you Fr. Stephen. KP



*Where can i begin to tell you how Father Stephen has changed my life. About 55years ago i left the catholic church. My marriage had ended and life became very difficult.*

*Last year a friend told me about Father Stephen and suggested contacting him just for a chat, nothing religious. Within a week he rang me and arranged to come "just for a chat."*

*He wasn't phased by my appearance in a wheelchair, completely disabled by a spinal stroke. We talked for an hour about my life and how it had gone wrong. Slowly with his amazing ability to help me see things clearly, that gentle voice explaining that no sin was too great to forgive. I began to see that he was right and i had missed out on so many years of help and peace. Now i am back in the fold. How i will miss his visits giving me hope and helping me to continue living the best life i can.*

*God bless you Father Stephen, there aren't enough words to thank you for all that you have done for me. JG*

...

We were so lucky to have you at Our Lady Star of the Sea. You were so kind, inspiring and amazing person. You will be greatly missed, but you will always be in my thoughts and prayers. May the Lord grant you eternal rest and let perpetual light shine upon you. May you rest in peace. LD

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*I am so grateful that Fr Stephen came to our parish, Our Lady Star of the Sea, East Preston. Arriving in the midst of a global pandemic, he brought comfort, cheeriness and a readiness to embrace new possibilities. He radiated God's love in his conversations, lifting our spirits and encouraging us to go forward. He was a familiar figure on the greensward delighting in the everyday antics of the dog walkers and the beauty of our surroundings. Fr Stephen is greatly missed, yet the message he brought, of hope and trust in God's goodness, lives on.*

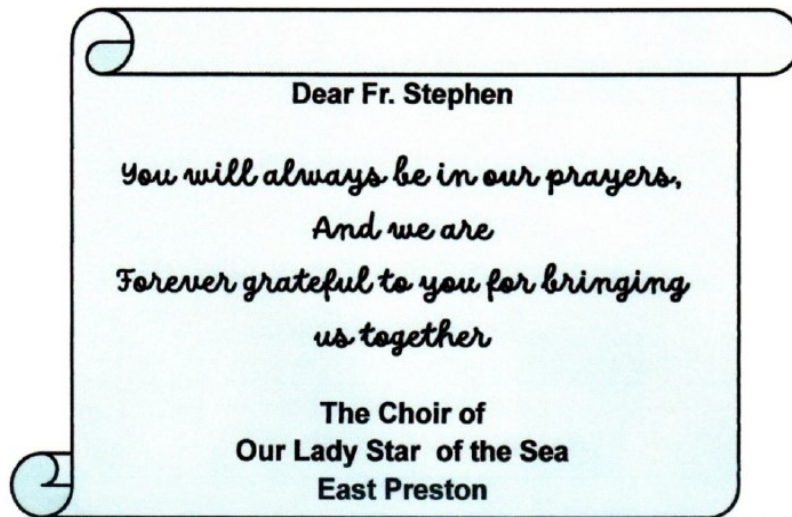
*May he rest in peace. JFA*

...

God bless you Father Stephen. Rest in peace and enjoy the company of God and the choirs of angels. We are so blessed to have known you and to have shared in your wisdom, you have made an unforgettable mark on our lives.

Your joyful, warm welcome and love, when we joined the parish, will never leave us and your gentle and happy nature will forever be with us. Thank you for enriching our lives by bringing us even closer to God. Pray for us all while you live in eternal glory. Amen. T&M E

...



*I would just like to add a few words to the many many contributions from other parishioners who have been in the Parish a lot longer than myself. Many thanks, and to say that it is wonderful that we have two dedicated deacons to support us and share this sad time in the parish. SR*

...

We could not have predicted the weight of grief that we felt on hearing about your passing - like an anchor had been lifted and not being able to say goodbye was so painful. Clearly, you meant so very much to so many people and we feel incredibly blessed that you were our much loved priest for three years at Our Lady Star of the Sea in East Preston. On several occasions you taught us that in life it's not the journey, but the company that counts and you were the most phenomenal company. Your wisdom, humility and brilliant sense of humour made Sunday mornings such a pleasure. You continue to be such an inspiration in our lives and will be forever in our hearts and prayers.

...

We were very grateful for having you as our priest and friend at Our Lady Star of the Sea. You have been outstanding all your life. We will miss you so much. M&M C

...



*Dear Fr Stephen, thank you, how we will miss your wisdom, kindness and twinkling good humour. May you rest in peace. FSC*

...

God loaned Fr Stephen to us for a short time, during which time he was an absolute jewel and so humble and loving. May he rest in peace. N&T T

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*I've written this on behalf of all Fr Stephen's friends and parishioners. When Fr Stephen stepped in to take Fr David's place, we didn't realise how blessed we were. Two quite different priests were both well loved.*

*I remember my first meeting with Fr Stephen when I tripped over a small fence outside his bungalow. That's when they first met too, Fr Stephen and my beautiful dog Blue. WE met quite a few times going to or from our beach walks. Sometimes we discussed a sermon he had given. These were so interesting always. He never minded my questions.*

*Several times after Mass a parishioner would like to ask about Fr Stephen, what people thought of our new priest. Their opinions much the same as all of us, a kind caring man who spoke to individuals as if he had known us before. Time spent almost uncanny we never felt that he was rushed.*

*One Sunday after Mass Fr Stephen spoke to me saying he'd heard that my beautiful dog Blue had died. Some people can be so kind at times like these. Fr Stephen had an approach like no other. I'll never forget his words, not just of comfort but he gave an explanation covering Blue's life with me as a beautiful gratitude.*

*I think of the time he spent on our walks and I saw there was a kind of rapport between him and Blue. Two with sociable hearts. Thank you Fr Stephen. Goodbye and God bless you. MA*

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Fr. Stephen was a very special Priest who we have been privileged to have as our 'Priest in Residence' in East Preston these past three and a half years. It was a pleasure to listen to his unscripted homilies during Mass. He impressed us with his charismatic faith, kindness and zest for life. We miss him deeply. May he 'Rest in Peace'. NA and PA.

...

*Fr Stephen loved his time spent at East Preston. We loved having him and he will be missed. May he rest in peace. EL*

...

Fr. Stephen was a great comfort to me and my family when we lost my mum. He got us through the second lockdown with his livestream Masses and has left a Church which is vibrant and full of young families. He was only with us for 3yrs but certainly made a big difference. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him. May he rest in peace. DB

...

*You taught us that it's not the journey, it's the company and to recognise the Christ brings. You were our Christ bringer for three good years, from your lockdown, live-streamed Masses in an empty church and your "Holy defiance" carols in a socially-distanced car park, to your anointing at the Deanery Mass in your now thriving parish. We were pleased to be called your dessert after your main course at Worth. It was a privilege to know you as priest and friend to so many and now God has called home his good servant.*

...

We are so blessed that this extraordinary man was sent to grace us with his all too brief presence in our tiny little Parish by the sea.

He was strikingly intellectual but so very gracious and humble. He once delivered a truly iconic homily about the role and status of women in the Church with respect to Our Lady: I am grateful I was able to tell him it was one of the most intelligent, progressive, considered, magnanimous and beautifully enlightened talks I have ever been lucky enough to witness. I only wish I'd recorded it. His sharp wit also afforded him a cracking sense of humour.

A remarkable and unforgettable person I feel honoured to have known" HM

...

*Father Stephen; always with a smile, very much loved and now sadly missed.*

*As Priest in Residence at Our Lady Star of the Sea, we were blessed to have known him.*

*He was an intellectual priest, who made the Gospels come alive - I sat in awe and wonder, listening to his inspirational teachings.*

*As part of his flock, I saw the community grow and develop, the children were calmly motivated, and the music and singing flourished beautifully.*

*Father Stephen was a forward thinker who shared his ideas with love, compassion and humility.*

*He had an infectious gift of making everyone welcome, greeting us all as his own congregation, and he regularly enjoyed the walks around East Preston village.*

*Father Stephen held a passion, presence and patience for the First Holy Communion children - so encouraging, kind and supportive.*

*I miss him dearly, but rejoice as he takes his place in Heaven.*

*Thank you to our Community Deacons, Allan and Tony, and to everyone at Worth Abbey who looked after and cared for Father Stephen, may he now Rest In Peace. AB C*



Father Stephen swept into our lives in the summer of 2020 during Covid when he arrived at Our Lady Star of the Sea. We have a family summer house called Blue Skies on the beach and Fr Stephen had stayed there as a novice in 1963 courtesy of my grandmother who often lent the house to the monks of Worth. He was delighted to discover that the house was still in the same family, and many other coincidences arose. Fr Stephen was at Downside with our uncle, had married several cousins and had been headmaster to many of our friends and relations. He was immediately adopted by all of us and became a regular visitor to Blue Skies, mostly dropping in off the greensward on his weekly/daily constitutions. The many young that form part of the summer crusade at Blue Skies instantly took him into their midst with absolute joy and he loved hanging out with them all.

Fr Stephen made each person he met feel so special and he never failed to find out all about them. He was like a gift from heaven, that not only revived the parish of East Preston wonderfully after Covid but also inspired so many of our young people with his humour and zest for life. We all at Blue Skies feel so privileged to have been able to enjoy much of his last three years. Knowing Fr Stephen was like encountering a little bit of Christ on earth and his departure from this world has touched us all deeply. We are broken hearted, and he will be extremely missed but we are so grateful to have known him during, in his own words, “the dessert of his life” and thankful to all he gave us. We hope that we too were able to give him much joy in these last years.

Some of Fr Stephen’s favourite expressions:

“Thank you, thank you, thank you, in that order”

“It’s not the journey, but the company”

“Onwards and upwards, as I like to say”

And when it was time to leave,” I have to go, I have an important call with the Pope”.

And in the words of all the young: “Father Stephen is a legend!”

United in prayer

MA & A with M, G, N, D and the many many people who passed through Blue Skies and were touched by Fr Stephen.

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