

## Memories of Fr Stephen

*Fr. Stephen Ortiger OSB (1940-2024) R.I.P*

**Priest in Residence at Our Lady Star of the Sea**

**July 2020 - February 2024**



## Memories of Fr Stephen from Deacon Allan and Deacon Tony:



Somewhere in the archives, there is a photograph of dear Fr. Stephen standing outside the Priest's House, aka `The Bungalow` holding the keys to his seaside paradise, beaming with joy and anticipation as he prepares to take up residence in his God given `Shangri-La`

New skills needed -working the washing machine, using the microwave, setting the heating controls and cooking (`What`s that?) All this and much more formed an integral part of a new life the likes of which he had never experienced before -and boy, did he enjoy it complete with its unavoidable challenges. Never ever having needed a front door key, he managed to shut himself out on more than one occasion, full of apologies as he rang Deacon Allan for assistance.

Parishioners soon realised that the `inner man` needed to be fed and kindly ensured that various foods and baking etc were delivered to his front door. On occasions Fr. Stephen would enter the Sacristy carrying a mixed bag of plastic containers and casserole dishes often saying, `I`ve no idea who they belong to so I`ll just leave them on the table outside. They will know which receptacle belongs to them`

Fr. Stephen was a tidy, even house proud resident. Both his Office and its extension, his long dining room table, always had neat piles of various papers invariably handwritten by him in true `apple pie` order.

We, Deacon Allan & Deacon Tony, were honoured, privileged and flattered to be included in `the Holy Trinity` Fr. Stephen`s pet name for the three of us which he sometimes shared with others. One of his pleasures was for us to meet up at regular intervals with the Anglican clergy from St. Mary`s East Preston over tea/coffee in what was formerly called the Seahorse Cafe. Deep theological discussions? You must be joking as for much of the time it involved true ecumenical banter, humour and all important Christian support. He loved it!

Fr. Stephen always treated his deacons with respect and gratitude, welcoming their input into a wide range of issues. Parishes without even one deacon were understandably a little envious of the East Preston set up.

The three of us had our golden (?) locks cut by the same village barber who often said how much he enjoyed talking to Fr. Stephen, what an interesting and varied life he had led. We did contemplate commissioning a blue plaque outside the premises with the inscription `Hairdresser to the Trinity`

Fr. Stephen was often seen around the village, always recognisable by his treasured and well-worn woolly hat on cold days. He thrived on being part of the local community, always willing to listen to people especially when they needed help and support. When he received any request for a bit of his personal time, the one word which never formed part of his answer was `No`.

The Summer holidays always saw an influx of visitors particularly at the Sunday Mass when former pupils, ex-members of staff, people he had baptised or married would suddenly pop up much to Fr. Stephen`s surprise, delight and happiness. Sometimes, the mutual relationship would go back many years and on occasions he would have to scratch his head to recall when and where he had met people. In our parish discussions, he sometimes felt the need to say `Does this name mean anything to you? Should I know who he/she is...can you help me? He knew all about `senior moments`.

There will already have been so many tributes to this dear man from people from all walks of life and yes, there will certainly be more to come. We 2 deacons have been privileged and blessed to work with and work for Fr. Stephen, full of admiration and gratitude for all that he has given to our Parish in the name of Our Blessed Lord. To say he will be missed is an understatement, but he will expect each and everyone of us to build on his legacy of Christian love, compassion and forgiveness. Deacon Allan & Deacon Tony.

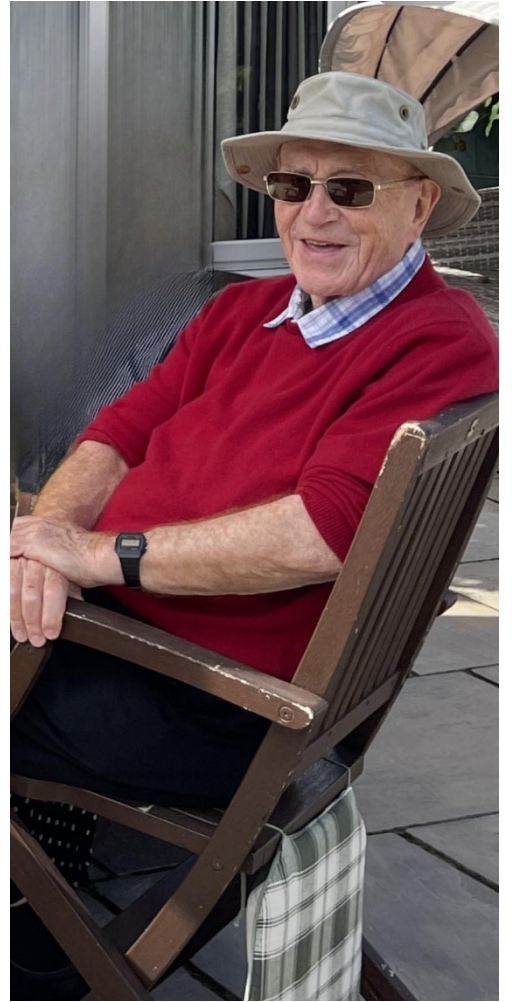


Fr Stephen thoroughly enjoyed his time at Our Lady Star of the Sea, East Preston. In his final letter to the Parish he included the following: "My time at Our Lady Star of the Sea has been some of my happiest. I was delighted when the Bishop asked me to take up this position and I have often told you how much I have loved being here and being with you."

Below are pictures from Fr Stephen's time with us at Our Lady Star of the Sea, East Preston:









Fr Stephen's funeral Mass was held at Worth Abbey on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2024. Abbott Mark Barrett presided over the Mass, joined by Deacon Allan, Deacon Tony, Bishop Richard, brethren from Worth Abbey and fellow Priests from Arundel and Brighton. Several Parishioners from Our Lady Star of the Sea were in attendance. Below are pictures taken by Stephanie Kalber on the day.











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