

Stephen Thomas Bohan

Eulogy

By John Bohan (Fr Steve's brother)

1948 – 2023

The Beginning

Steve was born on 5 July 1948 at the Benalla Hospital. He was the third son of Margaret and Frank Bohan. He had two older brothers at the time of his birth, Frank born in 1943 and I was born in 1944. The family was completed with the arrival of Bernie in 1950.

At that time the Bohans lived on a small farm on Warrenbayne Road, Baddaginnie, about six miles from Benalla. Now those of you who know your geography, you will be aware that Baddaginnie is not exactly Toorak. One of my older cousins famously claimed it was the last place God created and that he had forgotten to finish it.

Life in the late 40s and early 50s was much simpler than today. Giant leaps forward were the provision of the septic tank and the acquisition of a kerosene fridge to replace the Coolgardie safe.

Entertainment was provided by the radio which we called the wireless, obviously battery operated with plenty of hisses, crackles and static. As children we had our favourite programs: The Air Adventures of Biggles, Dad and Dave, Tarzan, and others that fitted into the time slot between 5 and 6 p.m. in the evening.

After dinner we always said the rosary. This brought out our competitive instincts, as we tried to be the brother who could get through his decade of the rosary in the quickest time.

School Years

Steve started school at St Josephs in Benalla in 1954. His advent at school was upstaged by another event that year, the Royal Tour of 1954. The Bohan children, along with all other school-aged children in the district and beyond, lined up along Barkly Street in Benalla to wave our Royal Ensigns to Her Majesty as she drove by.

It was also in 1954 that the Bohan family waved goodbye to Baddaginnie and moved into the town of Benalla.

A unique feature of Steve's schooling was his Grade 5 year, when he was taught by his mother. So, his mother was Mrs Bohan in the classroom and Mum at home.

Steve commenced his secondary education at FCJ College in Benalla in 1960. It was about that time that the then Convent started to take boys and Steve was possibly in the first such cohort.

For his Intermediate in 1963, Steve moved to Champagnat College, Wangaratta, as a boarder. In 1966 he was the College Sports Captain and he also matriculated in that year.

Seminary

In 1967 Steve entered the seminary at Werribee. Here, as well as pursuing his studies, Steve maintained his interest in sport and challenged his fitness with numerous long cross country runs in the You Yangs.

In 1973 Steve was ordained a Deacon at St Patrick's Cathedral and in the following year, on Friday 17 May, he was ordained priest at St Joseph's in Benalla. His first Mass was in Benalla on the Saturday.

Now, this was a colossal week for our Mum. Not only did she have a son ordained priest, but her first grandchild was born a week earlier on 10 May. So fortuitous circumstances allowed Steve to achieve a trifecta with the baptism of Paul on the same weekend as his ordination and first Mass.

Priestly Appointments

Steve's first appointment as a priest was to Rushworth parish in 1975.

In 1977 he moved to St Kilian's in Bendigo and to Yarrawonga in 1983.

Next, in 1986, he became the Diocesan Promoter for the "Renew" Programme and resided at the Heathcote presbytery.

At the start of 1990 he was appointed Assistant Priest at Wodonga and was involved in ongoing Adult Education in the Faith Programme.

By June 1990 he was on the move again, this time to the United States of America for overseas studies.

In 1992 Steve became the priest in charge of new seminarians at Corpus Christi College, a role he held for four years.

Our Lady's at South Wangaratta was his first appointment as a parish priest and that was in 1998.

And, as you good people of Yarrawonga know, he came home to you as your parish priest in 2004.

The Man

What sort of man was Steve Bohan? As well as carrying out his responsibilities to his parishioners, he threw himself into the local community and was active on many fronts. Examples abound including his love of cricket and his involvement with the Yarrawonga Football Club.

He often went the extra mile to help people who were troubled or down on their luck. One could argue that service and loyalty were his mottos.

He also had a great love of history, family history, general history, biblical history, any history at all. Clearly, he spent many hours on the National Library of Australia website as evidenced by the number of printouts that we have found in recent times as we sorted through his belongings.

The history of the local hotels, local street names, the noted and obscure service men and women of the area. If there was a way of ferreting out some new angle on the past, he managed to find it.

How do we sum him up? He held a deep religious faith and had deep convictions. He had a great interest in people and their circumstances and provided exceptional leadership and direction on which we could model our lives.

I am sure many of you are aware there were a few traits that he could have honed. His filing of documents lent more to the heap approach than any scientific methodology. The hoarding of the obviously useless and worn out was another example. We, as his family, noted that punctuality was not always high on his priority list.

But at the end of the day, the good in the man far outweighed any shortcomings. If I can sum up by slightly mangling a biblical quote:

You, Steve, have fought the good fight, you have finished the race, you have kept the faith. Now in store for you is the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge will award to you.

Thank You

Now, before I sit down, there are a few of things I want to say on behalf of my family to the parishioners of Sacred Heart and more generally to the people of Yarrawonga.

Thank you for embracing Steve, in taking him into your hearts and your homes. Thank you for the care and love you gave him over the years and especially in his last illness.

In particular, we want to thank Eileen Thorpe. Steve was an intensely private person. Getting through the defensive gate would not have been easy, getting him to take steps to help himself would have been hard. You persevered, thank you. You are a modern-day saint.

Thank you to Rikarla Phillips, Parish Secretary here at Sacred Heart, for your patience, care, and support of Steve over a number of years.

To Fr Joe Taylor, who entered the seminary in 1967 with Steve, for your friendship and support of Steve over 56 years, and for allowing Steve to reside with you for many months in Shepparton last year. Thank you, Fr Joe.

A big thank you to Bishop Shane (Mackinlay) and Bishop Les (Tomlinson) and the priests of the Sandhurst Diocese and beyond for sharing the journey with Steve for almost 50 years.

To the parishioners who provided Steve with meals in recent times, thank you.

To the staff at Goulburn Valley Health who treated Steve, we owe a deep debt of gratitude.

To the nurses at Yarrawonga Hospital, you only had Steve for his last 30 hours. Your love, respect and care and the raw emotion demonstrated in that brief time will remain embedded in my mind forever.

And to all of you here today to farewell Steve, and to those who have sent messages of support, thank you.

Close

There is no doubt Steve touched many lives. Until we meet again, may he rest in God's care.