

WORD FROM THE CLOISTERS

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Surprised by joy

“I'M ON LOAN to the Diocese of A&B and have been running a parish at East Preston, near Littlehampton, for the last three years; I'm loving it,” is the last message we had from Fr Stephen Ortiger OSB. A few weeks later, after a hip replacement operation, he received some unexpected news from his doctors. “I realise that the news of my cancer will come as a shock to you,” he wrote to his parishioners. “It has definitely taken me by surprise.” Two weeks later, on 27 January, he was dead.

He was born on 21 February 1940 in Delhi, the son of Joseph, an engineer on the Indian railways, and Eileen, née Owen-Brown. At the age of seven, his parents sent him from India to the prep school attached to Worth Abbey in Sussex. This is where he died 76 years later, among his monastic brethren, in the sixty-second year of his monastic profession, and where his Funeral Mass will take place on Saturday 17 February.

At 13, he had gone on from Worth to Downside, before leaving to study history at Cambridge. Then it was back to Worth. “The monks were stimulating company and also kind. They had planted the idea of monastic life in me,” he wrote later.



In 1983, Fr Ortiger became the third headmaster of Worth School; in 1994, following the death of Abbot Dominic Gaisford, he was elected the third Abbot of Worth. He founded the Worth Abbey retreat centre.

“He was convinced that a monastic community could be, and was called to be, a powerful source of gospel values for and in the wider world,” his friend and fellow photography enthusiast Mike Woodward tells us. In 2002, he was succeeded as abbot by Christopher Jamison.

“The disenchantments with life that we experience from time to time may be divine

disenchantments,” Ortiger once reflected. “Dear, wise and funny” is the way his huge crowd of friends saw him.

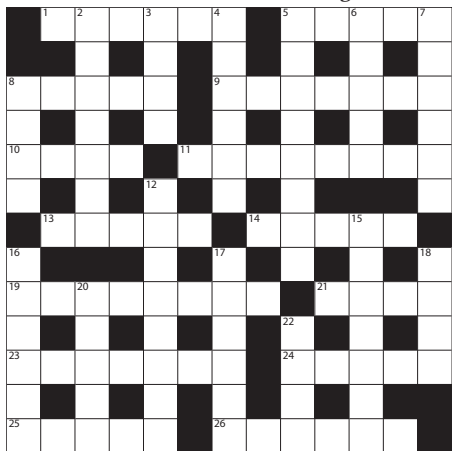
“His outsiderishness is quite key,” Mike Woodward observes. “Some upbringing in Calcutta, Huguenot forebears, only child. There was an impulse towards gregariousness which balanced his love of silence and commitment to prayer. He valued friendship, and his immense gift for spiritual conversation is reflected in the widespread thanksgiving for his life.”

Perhaps being shunted around as a child left its mark. He once appeared on *Mastermind*, choosing P.G. Wodehouse as his special subject, but he might just as well have picked Winnie-the-Pooh. His bouncy regular contributions to the “Worth Record” ranged from the merits of the Biggles books to Fritjof Capra. A man of contraries, he had a pilot's licence but couldn't (because he had never learned how to) change a light bulb.

“Why God has wanted me to be a monk and a priest is a mystery but I've found it a joyful rather than a sorrowful one,” he used to say. “If a priest is a shepherd, I've had the privilege of meeting some extremely impressive sheep, men and women whom I have found inspirational. It's been a glorious two-way street.”

PUZZLES

PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 890 Enigma



Across

- 1 A little bird told us that they came back with ten nil (6)
- 5 That nuisance contributes nothing to the sauce (5)
- 8 In the city, I sink into the couch (5)
- 9 A parrot keeps things in proportion (3,4)
- 10 Refers to things we have owned for a while, they say (4)
- 11 Popular old shilling has no connection to an American blackbird (8)
- 13 The moral iniquity involved in eating (5)
- 14 Fights for the containers (5)
- 19 Poor chap; time to be compassionate! (8)
- 21 Silly clerics desert services for summer treats (4)
- 23 Watch an alumnus assist at the altar (7)

- 24 He'll react with dismay; believe me, it's possible! (5)
- 25 Container bringing fish to the church dance (5)
- 26 Terribly tense about starting trouble over beliefs (6)

Down

- 2 Deduce that there isn't a fire (7)
- 3 Seafarer disobeys the instructions of the doctor examining his throat (4)
- 4 Return the pot to the biblical personage with the most senior position (3, 3)
- 5 Official procedure confuses the poor clot (8)
- 6 There were hostas in the garden, concealing the old policemen (5)

- 7 Biblical vessels from the Antipodes found in American mountains (6)
- 8 Demonstrate how to be quiet before expressing pain (4)
- 12 I say; I succeeded in the examination by describing a rural scene (8)
- 15 Directions to a sinister place; put them in code! (7)
- 16 Extremely brave, that woman! Oh! I see! (6)
- 17 The Agadir estimate is the worst (6)
- 18 A statement of intent on my part to describe Ireland poetically (4)
- 20 An injured priest has no right to be on the ski slope (5)
- 22 A sign saying “women only” (4)

Please send your answers to: Crossword Competition 10 February, The Tablet, 1 King Street Cloisters, Clifton Walk, London W6 0GY. Email: thetablet@thetablet.co.uk, with Crossword in the subject field. Please include your full name, telephone number and email address, and a mailing address. Three books – on Pilgrimage, Protestantism and The New Testament as Literature – from OUP's Very Short Introduction series will go to the sender of the first correct entry drawn at random.

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SUDOKU | Moderate

	4	6	1		8	9	5	
				3				
		1	9	6	7	4		
3								2
			3		5			
		8		1		7		
5								8
	6			4				1

Each 3x3 box, each row and each column must contain all the numbers 1 to 9.

Solution to the 20 January puzzle

1	3	9	7	2	4	8	6	5
2	8	4	6	9	5	3	7	1
5	6	7	1	3	8	9	2	4
6	9	8	4	5	2	1	3	7
3	7	2	8	1	6	4	5	9
4	5	1	3	7	9	2	8	6
7	2	3	5	4	1	6	9	8
8	1	5	9	6	3	7	4	2
9	4	6	2	8	7	5	1	3

Solution to the 20 January crossword No. 887

- Across: 6 Jehu; 7 Metaphor; 8 Julius Caesar; 9 Good Standing; 11 Streptomycin; 16 Irving Berlin; 18 Foretell; 19 Doha.
Down: 1 Bebung; 2 Fuji; 3 Strata; 4 Episodic; 5 Dorran; 7 Moses; 10 Overview; 12 Tripod; 13 Tanner; 14 Mabel; 15 Neighs; 17 Ryde.