



Historical Highlights

Fr. Stephen Murtagh O.F.M. Cap.

+March 4, 1980

Stephen Murtagh is a friar who did a vast amount of work helping lay the foundation of Our Lady of Angels Province. He had a somewhat erratic manner of working and at times could be very aggressive. But he got things accomplished. In 1937 after for a few years in different parishes he succeeded Joseph Fenelon as Custos Provincial, a position he held until 1956 when Emilian Meade succeeded him. During his nineteen-year term Stephen served as pastor of St. Francis parish Los Angeles where he built the parish school. He saw the opening of Friary at McKenzie Bridge, Oregon in 1937. This foundation never developed due in part to its isolation. In 1954 he withdrew the Friars from there, handing over the staffing of the house to the Dominicans. In 1947 Stephen oversaw the Seminary experiment at Old Mission Santa Ines, Solvang. Despite the expectations, it was not a success and was closed the following year 1948. But Stephen had one great and lasting success, that of St. Francis High School La Cañada Flintridge, California. In 1946 he bought the old Flintridge Golf club building plus some property and established a school. We all know the success of this move by Stephen. It was the beginning of the firm establishment of the Capuchins and the eventual growth of our Province on the West Coast. After his term as Custos Provincial Stephan served a few years from 1957 until 1966 as pastor of St. Francis parish Bend, Oregon. His last years were lived out at St. Francis High School, where he died in 1980. He is buried at San Lorenzo Seminary in Santa Ynez.

In gratitude to our brother, Stephen, and the friars of the Mother Province of St. Patrick, please pray one *Glory be to the Father*.

Adapted from: (Fr. Michael James O'Shea, OFM Cap: Necrology)