

Mar. 8, Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, Priest, Poet

Gerelyn Hollingsworth | Mar. 8, 2010 NCR Today

"Good people have told me that my writing is crude and brutal. I would remind you that it is not, and it could not be as crude as war, or as brutal as a battle. The brutality of war is literally unutterable. There are no words foul and filthy enough to describe it. Yet I would remind you that this indescribably filthy thing is the commonest thing in history, and that if we believe in a God of love at all, then we must believe in the face of war and all it means."

--Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, quoted in [*Celebrating the Saints: Devotional Readings for Saints' Days*](#), [1] by Robert Atwell and Christopher L. Webber, Morehouse, 2001

Today is the anniversary of the death of "The Rev. Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, better known as Woodbine Willie, [who] became one of the best known figures of World War I.

"At the outbreak of the war he volunteered as a chaplain, and won the Military Cross in 1917.

"His habit of handing out cigarettes to troops earned him his nickname, being a heavy smoker himself."

"He was also a published poet, writing two books about his war experiences: *Rough Rhymes of a Padre* (1918), and *More Rough Rhymes* (1919).

"After the war he became closely involved in the Christian socialist and the pacifist movements, touring the country giving public lectures."

--BBC, ["Woodbine Willie: A Cleric at War"](#) [2]

When Studdert Kennedy died in 1929, thousands lined the streets of Worcester. "They tossed packets of [Woodbines](#) [3] onto the passing cortege."

"If to be a priest is to carry others on the heart and offer them with self in the sacrifice of human nature - The Body and the Blood - to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ - then Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy was the finest priest I have ever known."

--William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury

Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy M. C.
A Poet: A Prophet: A Passionate seeker after Truth
An ardent advocate of Christian Fellowship
Chaplain to H. M. King George VI
Chaplain to the Forces
Rector of S. Edmund King and Martyr in the City of London
Sometime Vicar of S. Pauls in this City
Born 27 June 1883 Died 8 March 1929.

--a plaque in [Worcester Cathedral](#) [4]

["He took up his cross: Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy, 'Woodbine Willie'."](#) [5] a sermon by the Rev. John Davies.

[The Unutterable Beauty: The Collected Poetry of G. A. STUDDERT KENNEDY.](#) [6] Note, "Missing--Believed Killed", "It's Hard To Be A Carpenter", "The Psychologist", and "Old England".

[Rough Rhymes of a Padre,](#) [7] by G. A. Studdert Kennedy. Note, "War", and "A Scrap of Paper".

[After War, Is Faith Possible?: The Life and Message of Geoffrey "Woodbine Willie" Studdert Kennedy,](#) [8] was edited by Kerry Walters, 2008. Note the comments on the back cover by John Perry, S.J.

Click [here](#) [9] for images of Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy.

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Links:

[1] http://www.amazon.com/Celebrating-Saints-Devotional-Readings-Days/dp/0819218839/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&camp=s=books&qid=1268006041&sr=1-1

[2] http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/herefordandworcester/hi/people_and_places/history/newsid_8339000/8339671.stm

[3] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodbine_\(cigarette\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodbine_(cigarette))

[4] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Worcester_Cathedral

[5] http://www.johndavies.org/sermons/gs_09_03_08.html

[6] <http://www.mun.ca/rels/restmov/texts/dasc/TUB.HTM>

[7] http://www.amazon.com/Rhymes-Geoffrey-Anketell-Studdert-Kennedy/dp/114104630X/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&camp=s=books&qid=1268012008&sr=1-2

[8] http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1556353790/ref=pd_lpo_k2_dp_sr_2?pf_rd_p=486539851&pf_rd_s=lpo-top-stripe-1&pf_rd_t=201&pf_rd_i=0761992774&pf_rd_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf_rd_r=1EPJQESM7WE

[9] <http://images.google.com/images?hl=en&source=hp&ie=ISO-8859-1&q=geoffrey+studdert+kennedy&btnG=Search+Images&gbv=2>