

## 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](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](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](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Worcester_Cathedral)

[5] [http://www.johndavies.org/sermons/gs\\_09\\_03\\_08.html](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](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-](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)

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