

## **The Very Rev Monsignor Gerard Robert Hand**

was born in Edinburgh on the 12th January 1949. His father was James Hand, an electrician and his mother was Betty Hand m.s. Fee, who made their family home in the Canongate area of Edinburgh. Father Hand was one of four children with an older brother James and younger brother and sister, twins, Peter and Maureen.

He was educated at St Anne's Cowgate (which was then the infant department of St Patrick's Primary School) from 1954 – 1957 and then at St Patrick's Primary School from 1957 to 1961. His secondary education was at Holy Cross Academy Edinburgh from March 1961 to June 1966.



At the age of 17 in September 1966, Gerard Hand went to St Andrew's College, Drygrange near Melrose in the Scottish Borders, which was at that time the Diocesan Seminary for the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh. As part of his seminary formation he took a year out from his studies to teach from August 1969 to August 1970.

He then resumed his studies in Drygrange where he concluded his seminary training in June 1973.

Father Hand was Ordained in Edinburgh on Sunday the 25th March 1973 by Bishop Monaghan, Auxiliary Bishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh, at St Patrick's in the Cowgate.

His first appointment in September 1973 was as assistant Priest to Fr. John Byrne in St Andrew's Craighill in Livingston for 4 years until 1977. During this posting he was appointed as the first Chaplin to St Kentigern's Academy in Blackburn West Lothian.

In September 1977 Father Hand commenced a period of further study in Moral Theology at the Gregorian University in Rome. In the summer of 1979 he gained a diploma in Moral Theology (STL) and returned to Scotland.

Later in the summer of 1979 he was appointed to the staff of the Diocesan Seminary at St Andrew's College in Drygrange where was to teach mainly in Moral Theology with emphasis upon Justice and Peace. Whilst on the Staff of the Seminary, Father Hand also had other important duties - he was the 'Fireman' and also the 'Barman'!

In addition to his Seminary teaching duties, Father Hand became Chaplin to the Scottish Catholic Marriage Advisory Council centre in Edinburgh in 1984. Later, he also became the Chairperson of the Centre and he became the advisor to the National Co-ordination Group of the SCMAC. Ultimately, he became the National Chairperson of the SCMAC.

Father Hand represented both the Diocesan Seminary College and the Archdiocese on the Board of the 'Centre for Theology and Public Issues' during the important political period of change in Scotland before during and after the Scottish Devolution consultation and implementation process from 1985 – 2002.

In the autumn of 1985 Father Hand was appointed Vicar Episcopal for Justice and Peace. His

main duties included the establishment of Diocesan Justice and Peace and SCIAF Groups and he also had significant involvement in the Northern Ireland Group. Regarding the Northern Ireland Group and bearing in mind that during this period the '*Troubles*' in Northern Ireland were continuing unabated, pressure was growing to find a political solution, Father Hand's role was to help to develop consciousness and understanding amongst the Scottish population of the complex issues facing Justice, Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

When St Andrew's College in Drygrange closed in the summer of 1986, Father Hand was then appointed to the staff of the new Gillis College which was located at Whitehouse Loan in Edinburgh in the buildings of the former St Margaret's Convent School. He was to remain teaching at Gillis until the summer of 1991.

Father Hand was then appointed Parish Priest of St Patrick's Kilsyth in February 1991 taking over this role from Fr Charlie Barclay who had been Parish Administrator of St Patrick's for some months following the sudden death of Fr Bernard Doonan in 1990. This appointment was made despite the fact the Father Hand was still teaching at Gillis College up until the June of 1991.

Father Hand remained the Parish Priest of St Patrick's until February 2006. During his time in Kilsyth Fr Hand established a Pastoral Council in the Parish, always assisted by the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception whose convent was located in Kilsyth for most of Fr Hand's tenure.

The fabric of the Parish had been allowed to fall into disrepair and he worked tirelessly to achieve a £1.25 million refurbishment of the Grade A listed Gillespie Kidd and Coia designed church and grounds in 1999/2000.

He was also involved with encouraging parishioners to develop and exercise more pastoral responsibility. He was closely involved with the Justice and Peace group in Kilsyth, and with many inter-church activities in the town. Most notably the relationship with Rev Mr McLachlan and The Burns and Old Parish Church of Scotland who allowed Fr Hand and the Parishioners of St Patrick's to use their church to say Mass during the period when St Patrick's was under refurbishment in 1999 and 2000.

He and the parishioners were also planning for the provision of a new church hall at the time of his departure from St Patrick's in 2006 a building project that was ultimately fulfilled long after his departure from St Patrick's by Fr James Tracey in 2013.

Father Hand became a member of the SCIAF Executive as well as continuing to support SCIAF through his Justice and Peace responsibilities.

Father Hand also became Diocesan Pastoral Co-ordinator in taking over this role from Fr Charlie Barclay.

He was appointed in 2006 as the Parish Priest of St Paul's Glenrothes and St Mary's Leslie in Fife. In addition to these Parish duties, he was also appointed as Priest of the Chapel Royal at Falkland Palace.

In August 2007 Father Hand was appointed Dean of St Andrew's and St Margaret's Deanery,

the Vicar Episcopal for Fife and was reappointed to this post for a second term in 2012.

He was also appointed to the Council of Priests in the College of Consultors for the Archdiocese of St Andrew's and Edinburgh.

In August 2010 Father Hand was appointed as a Chaplin to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI with the title of Monsignor.



Fr Hand at St Patrick's School with Fr William Brenan, Fr James Tracey, Fr. Scott Deeley and Cathie Craigie MSP amongst others.



Fr Hand presents Rev Alistair McLachlan of the Burns and Old Parish Church, on the occasion of his departure from Kilsyth, with an antique map showing the route between his old Parish and his new Parish.

## Some memories of Fr Hand



Fr Hand at Celtic Park



On Church roof in 1999 - (1)



On Church roof in 1999 - (2)



Fr Hand with  
McDonald family,  
Mgr McNally,  
& Eileen Robinson  
(October 1994)



Fr Hand's first service at the Kilsyth  
War  
Memorial in Nov 1991.  
The others in the photo are, left to  
right,  
Rev Mr A McLaclan, Burns & Old  
Parish  
Church, Rev Mr Ross, Anderson  
Parish  
Church and the Rev Mr Watker.



Presentation of  
SCIAF Cheque  
(15th May 1996)

Please Pray for

**Gerard R. Hand**

Ordained

in St. Patrick's, Edinburgh

on 25th March, 1973

on the occasion of the  
**25th Anniversary of his Ordination**  
celebrated at St. Patrick's, Kilsyth  
25th March 1998

Lord grant eternal rest  
to my father and mother;  
bless my sisters and brothers,  
sisters in law, nieces and nephews,  
and all who have helped me.

Design: A. Delahunt

WISDOM TOUCH MY LIFE TODAY  
AT THE POINT OF  
GREATEST NEED.



Do not look forward to  
what might happen tomorrow;  
The same Everlasting Father who  
cares for you today, will take  
care of you tomorrow and every  
day. Either He will shield you  
from suffering or He will give  
you unfailing strength to bear  
it. Be at peace, then, and put  
aside all anxious thoughts  
and imaginings.

St Francis de Sales.

The front and the rear of the anniversary prayer card printed  
for the silver anniversary of the ordination of Fr Gerry Hand



Fr Hand blesses the graves in Kilsyth cemetery in 2005



Fr Hand presents a Bible to the Kilsyth Civic Queen

# Cardinal names four monsignors

SCO 10/12/2011

**C**ARDINAL Keith O'Brien elevated four priests from St Andrew's and Edinburgh Archdiocese to be monsignors of the archdiocese during celebrations for the Feast Day of St Andrew at St Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh.

"I take the opportunity on the Feast of the Patron Saint of Scotland, St Andrew, of thanking all my brother priests for the way in which they have and are serving in our archdiocese," Cardinal O'Brien said. "I have singled out four priests for particular thanks and have asked Pope Benedict XVI to name them as 'Chaplains of His Holiness', with the title of monsignor. Our Holy Father has readily agreed."

The cardinal added that: "When he was on his visit to the United Kingdom, Pope Benedict XVI addressed the Bishops of England, Scotland and Wales at Oscott College in England. Among other things he stated to the bishops and priests: 'If we are to be effective Christian leaders, we must live lives of the utmost integrity, humility and holiness. As Blessed John Henry Newman once wrote—Oh that God would grant the clergy to feel their weakness as sinful men, and the people to sympathise with them and love them and pray for their increase in all good gifts of grace.'

As part of St Andrew's Feast Day celebrations last month, **CARDINAL KEITH O'BRIEN** announced that four priests in St Andrews and Edinburgh had been elevated to monsignors of the archdiocese

"I pray that among the graces of this visit will be a renewed dedication on the part of Christian leaders to the prophetic vocation they have received, and a new appreciation on the part of the people for the great gift of the ordained ministry. Prayer for vocations will then arise spontaneously."

These four priests whom the cardinal made canons on November 30 are Canon James Rae, Canon Brian Halloran, Fr Francis Kerr and Fr Gerry Hand. He went on to pay each of them tribute.

**1: Canon James Rae, parish priest of St John the Evangelist, Portobello**

Canon Rae has served Cardinal O'Brien and my predecessor in a variety of ways—not only in his outstanding parish apostolate, but also on many committees in the archdiocese during his long years in the priesthood. His parish and the schools working in collaboration with him in his parish area have an outstanding bond with the Diocese of Moshi in Tanzania, which I

myself have had the privilege of visiting.

A mark of his regard by his brother priests is the fact that Canon Rae was elected as Provost of the Metropolitan Cathedral Chapter, a role which he still holds, as well as being parish priest, up to this present time when he is now 84 years of age.

**2: Canon Brian Halloran, retired parish priest of St James Parish, St Andrews**

Canon Halloran has served the diocese particularly in parishes in Fife, but also and especially in the parish of St James in St Andrews, having also responsibility for the parishes of Christ the King, Pittenweem and Most Holy Trinity, Crail. He has shown himself to be a brilliant academic and while chaplain to the Catholic students at St Andrews University and parish priest of three parishes he has also undertaken further studies at St Andrews University, adding to his initial degree of bachelor of divinity, the degree of master of philosophy and then a doctorate in philosophy. His apostolate in the university over those

years was recognised in the summer of 2010 when he was awarded the very prestigious annual 'Medal of the University' at a graduation ceremony.

The honour on Canon Brian is being conferred 'in absentia' as he is now undertaking a valued apostolate for a sabbatical year in the Diocese of Yendi in Ghana, recognised as being one of the poorest in that country.

**3: Fr Francis Kerr, parish priest of St Peter's, Edinburgh and St Columba's, Edinburgh**

Fr Kerr has served in a variety of parochial appointments while also rendering outstanding work as Secretary of the archdiocese during my predecessor's episcopate and then, as now, working with regard to both fabric and planning and finance in the archdiocese.

His pastoral zeal has never slackened and he was only too willing to assume responsibility also for the parish of St Columba's, while remaining as parish priest of St Peter's and

continuing to serve his people and his school, along with many hospital and retirement home responsibilities.

**4: Fr Gerry Hand, Parish Priest of St Paul's, Glenrothes, St Mary's, Leslie and Falkland Palace**

As well as his parochial responsibilities, following on his further studies, Fr Hand became a professor at St Andrew's College, Drygrange and then at Gillis College, Edinburgh until the closure of the college.

He has assumed responsibility for large parishes, initially in St Patrick's, Kilsyth and then in Glenrothes and Leslie, along with Falkland Palace. After Falkland Palace, he combined his work in parishes with his valued apostolate as Vicar Episcopal for Justice and Peace, a difficult task in which he built up a strong group of like-minded people.

He has exerted a tremendous influence in the archdiocese with regard to pastoral planning and ensuring that in his own parishes, he applies the principles that he would expect others to apply in their own parishes. He is academically very able, is of sound spirituality and challenges all in our archdiocese by many of the things that he says and does.