

Father William O'Raw

William O'Raw was born on 20th August 1876 at Main Street in Kilsyth. He was educated at Blairs Seminary in Aberdeen and the Petit Seminaire de Notre Dame des Champs in Paris from 1893 till 1895. He then continued his studies at the Scots College in Rome 1895 until 1900 where he was ordained at the end of his studies.

On returning to Scotland in 1900 he was posted to Edinburgh Cathedral for 2 years until 1902. He was then sent to the Parish of Ss John Cantius and Nicholas in Broxburn where he served as assistant Priest from 1902 until 1904. St Patrick's Lochgelly was to be his last recorded Parish placement where he served again as assistant Priest from 1904 until 1905.

There are no further entries in the Catholic Directory for Scotland regarding Fr O'Raw after this date. It is clear that at some point after 1905 Fr O'Raw left the Priesthood. Tragically he died at the age of only 36 on the 24th January 1913 in Glasgow whilst living at the Hotel Cecil and listing his occupation as Clerk. Living relatives in Kilsyth suggest that after the death of his father in 1903 he developed an alcohol dependence which was the root cause of his departure from holy orders.

Below is an article that was published in the Kilsyth Chronicle regarding the death of Fr O'Raw's own father, Richard O'Raw in Kilsyth.

“Death of Mr Richard O'Raw, Kilsyth.

This well-known inhabitant of Kilsyth passed away on Sunday morning. He had not enjoyed robust health for some time, but his death, somewhat sudden, was due to paralytic shock. A native of Donegal, Mr O'Raw came to Kilsyth about 40 years ago. For some time, he found employment in the mines. About a quarter of a century ago, Mr O'Raw began a business as a pawnbroker and continued that until the end. Outside his own business he was well known for the interest he took in the poor. Perhaps no-one knew better the difficulties of the poor and certainly he was ever ready to do whatever lay in his powers to help them. That knowledge and willingness to help were of great service in the Parochial Board and Parish Council, in the business of which the deceased took a quiet but most useful part. The same kindly spirit induced Mr O'Raw to efficiently act as President of the 'St Vincent de Paul Society' for the Relief of poor Roman Catholics.

An attached member of St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, Mr O'Raw was always generous in his support of the schemes of the Church and bore a leading share in enlarging the church five years ago and raising funds to meet the cost. His kindly smile and genial wit made him a favourite in social circles. He is survived by three daughters and three sons, one of the latter being Fr William O'Raw, who is attached to the pro-Cathedral, Edinburgh. The funeral of the deceased on Tuesday was largely attended, members past and present of the Parish Council turning out in a body to show their respect for one who was so long a colleague. The impressive service in St Patrick's Chapel and at the grave in Kilsyth cemetery was conducted by the Very Rev Canon Turner, assisted by Father William O'Raw.”

Kilsyth Chronicle 1903. Exact date of issue not known but it is in the Jan – March 1903 catalogue.