

Karl Canon Kruger



Karl Kruger, son of a Jewish mother and a Presbyterian father, was born in Berlin on April 7th, 1924. He arrived in Edinburgh in 1939 at the age of 15 as a refugee from Nazi Germany along with his brother Hans. Soon afterwards he was picked up on his way to church, wearing his school uniform of Edinburgh Academy and was deported to a detention camp for aliens in Canada. There he became a Catholic in 1940. On his return to Scotland he expressed an interest in becoming a priest and after a short period of reflection, he was accepted to be educated at St Mary's College Blairs in Aberdeen and St Edmund's College Ware. He was ordained in Edinburgh on the 17th July 1949 at

the age of 25 by The Most Reverend Andrew J MacDonald OSB, Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh. He never forgot his Jewish roots and the Reformed Protestant faith of his family back in Berlin. His brother Hans also became a Catholic and followed Fr Kruger into the Priesthood and is now known as Fr Boniface.

After service for a year as assistant Priest at St Ninian and Triduane at Restalrig in Edinburgh from 1949 to 1950 he continued with further studies this time at Cambridge University for 4 years from 1950 to 1953. After a further year as an assistant priest at St Cuthbert's Edinburgh (1953 to 1954) he undertook a period teaching as a Professor at Blairs Seminary followed by yet further studies at the Institut Catholique in the Sorbonne University de Paris, where he completed a 3-year course in the doctoral Licentiate in Philosophy in only 2 years and having done so, graduated *summa cum laude*.

Following his many studies Canon Kruger then undertook an extensive academic tenure as Professor at the Diocesan Senior Seminary of St Andrews at Drygrange from 1957 to 1970.

He then went to Parish work in Grangemouth on 1st Sept 1970 having been appointed by Cardinal Gordon Gray to establish a new church of Christ the King. As well as undertaking his parish duties, the then Father Kruger also took a great interest in the wider community in Grangemouth. He was the chairman and founder member of Grangemouth Enterprises, a member of Grangemouth Council of Churches, Christian Aid, Chairman of the local Catholic Marriage Advisory Committee as well as being the Dean of the Deanery of St Mungos for the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh.

On the 26th November 1987 Father Kruger was transferred to St. Patrick's Parish in Kilsyth. Shortly thereafter in 1988 he was admitted to the Cathedral Chapter of Canons by the then Archbishop Keith Patrick O'Brien. Canon Karl Kruger died suddenly and unexpectedly only 18 months after his arrival in Kilsyth on 24th May 1989. After Mass with a congregation of nearly 1000 people in St Patrick's, containing many of his friends from Grangemouth, his remains were interred at Kilsyth cemetery beside one of his predecessors as Parish Priest of St Patrick's Kilsyth, Thomas Canon McGarvey. Fr Boniface, his brother, after concelebrating Canon Kruger's funeral Mass, donated his chalice to the people of St Patrick's Kilsyth. This chalice is used on a daily basis for communion and from time to time by Fr Boniface, who for many years returned to say Mass in St Patrick's around the anniversary of Canon Kruger's death when he was able to do so.



The image immediately above of Canon Kruger, is from an original painting by Charlie McGuire of Grangemouth.

Eulogy given by His Grace Archbishop O'Brien at his funeral Mass in Kilsyth

"In Canon Karl Kruger we have lost a great friend – and the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh has lost a great priest.

Karl-Heinz Kruger, or KHK as he was more affectionately known later, was born in Berlin on the 7th April 1924. As a boy of 15 his life was disrupted when, because his mother was a Jewess, he was forced to become a refugee from Nazi Germany with his younger brother Hans, now Fr Boniface O.F.M., and he was separated from his family.

He arrived in Scotland in 1939 through the agency of a refugee organisation, but after the outbreak of war he was interred as an alien – arrested one Sunday morning while preparing for Church and was taken away, separated from his brother Hans, clad ironically in the school uniform of Edinburgh Academy. His brother Hans was too young to be arrested.

After a short stay at a camp in England he was deported, still a prisoner to Canada, still clad in his school uniform – a fact which proved an asset in Canada as one of the prison guards was a former pupil of Edinburgh Academy and was very good to him.

Canon Kruger was naturally reticent about those years and one respected his privacy, but they must have been painful years for him. Only once in the long years of our friendship did he ever speak of them – on the last occasion we were together a couple of weeks ago. It was to say – perhaps in hindsight, that it was then, the only time in his life, that he felt the hand of God was obviously, almost tangibly at work in him.

While imprisoned in camp in Canada, he met and became friendly with another refugee from Hitler's Germany, Bernhard Pfundk, a student for the priesthood whose studies had been interrupted when he fled Germany. As Canon Kruger put it they had absolutely nothing else to do, so they just discussed theology, day in and day out, and his mentor was very knowledgeable and thorough.

On returning to Scotland in 1940, he became a Catholic, he had been brought up a Lutheran, expressed his desire to study for the priesthood but being a new convert, he was asked to wait and pray about it. He did and in 1943 entered St Mary's College, Blairs, to commence his study of Philosophy.

The War was still on and officially he was not completely free; for the record he was, like many P.O.W.s and internees, an agricultural worker on the home farm in Blairs. He completed his study in Philosophy, but while his fellow students moved on, he was forced to remain at Blairs as an agricultural worker for another year, during which he began his further study of Philosophy alone, tutored by members of the staff at Blairs, doing

his daily stint on the farm. The following year he was allowed his freedom and re-joined some of his former fellow-students at St Edmund's College, Ware.

He completed his theology and was ordained to the priesthood on 17th July 1949 in St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh by the late Archbishop McDonald. He was delighted that his father was present at his ordination – his mother having died during the war.

After his ordination he served for a year as a curate at St Ninian's Edinburgh, before being sent to Cambridge where he graduated in French and German in 1953. He returned to Edinburgh where he served another year as a curate in St Cuthbert's Parish. In 1954 he was appointed to the staff of St Mary's College, Blairs, the national junior seminary for students to the priesthood.

However his own days as a student were not yet over, for in 1955 he was sent to the Institut Catholique in Paris to study for a degree in Philosophy. He completed his Licentiate in Philosophy and wrote his doctoral thesis on Husserl in 2 years, although the Licentiate was a 3-year course. He was awarded a *summa cum laude*.

In the summer of 1957 he was appointed to the staff of St Andrew's College Drygrange, where he lectured in Philosophy for the next 13 years and is remembered with great affection by the staff and students of that era.

In 1970 he was appointed to the newly formed Parish of Christ the King, Grangemouth, where he built the presbytery and church complex which opened in 1975. Finally, he came to Kilsyth 2 years ago and was last year made a Canon of the Cathedral Chapter. He died on the 24th May 1989.

Over the years Canon Kruger was indefatigable. During his years in Drygrange over and above his lectures in philosophy he found time to be promoter of Vocations in the archdiocese – advising, organising seminars and working with boys prior to their entry to the seminary.

Also during those years he undertook and completed the translation from German the monumental multi-volume work of the perhaps the leading, but obtuse, theologian of the 20th Century: The “*Theological Investigations*” of Karl Rahner. Indeed it is widely held that to understand Rahner one has to read him in the Kruger translation!

While in Grangemouth Canon Kruger found time to set up, organise and direct the Catholic Marriage Advisory Council in Central Region – work which he continued to the end.

He served as Dean, sat on the Council of Priests and when the program of renewal in the Archdiocese was envisaged, he was involved in setting it up and directing it – work which he also continued to the end. In Grangemouth too, he found time to be actively involved in the setting up and in the running of ‘Grangemouth Enterprises’ a project in conjunction with Manpower Services, a project employing youth workers in the restoration and resale of furniture. He remained involved even after his appointment to Kilsyth.

One could only admire his tremendous stamina and application over the years. He found time – he made time.

It is very difficult to pay adequate tribute to Canon Kruger – but the short curriculum vitae speaks for itself. He was, in the kindest possible sense, a complex person. Given his early years one might suspect that he would be academic, removed and aloof. Nothing could be further from the truth, he wore his learning lightly and all his work was pastorally oriented.

He was a private person, reticent about himself – above all reticent about his achievements, but at the same

time he was outgoing, generous, understanding and above all extremely charitable. He invited trust and confidence, was a wise councillor as we know and much loved by all who knew him. One always left his company enriched and enhanced.

His dedication and his application to his priestly work and the efficiency which he carried out all that he undertook or was asked to undertake – these were there for all to see, things that even he could not hide.

When one thinks of Canon Kruger it is one who had definitely had decided his priorities and who lived out his life undeviatingly according to those priorities. He had chosen to follow Our Lord in the priesthood and whatever else he may have been, he was first last and foremost a priest and no-one was ever allowed to forget that fact. Throughout his life he burdened himself with only that which was necessary for his priestly work – all his work was priestly work. In his death the age old adage was fulfilled '*repentina mors, sacerdotis sors*' – sudden death is the lot of the priest.

His last wish of all of us is expressed in the final words of his very short will: '*pray for me, a poor sinner.*'"

Eulogy by kind permission of The Scottish Catholic Directory, 1990 edition, page 403 - 405.

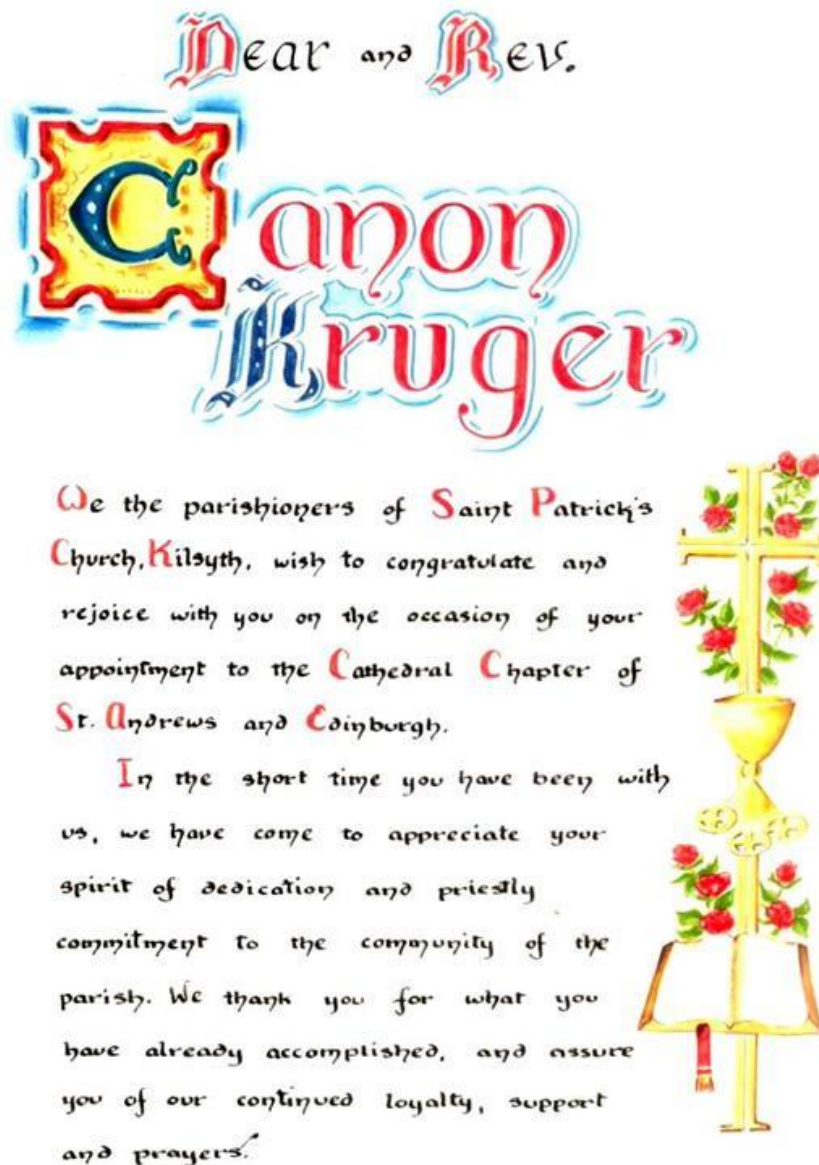


Canon Kruger coffin lies in the aisle - head towards the altar as is the tradition at the funeral of a priest. Look at the crowd - standing room only at the back as all the benches were full in the nave of the church and the gallery.

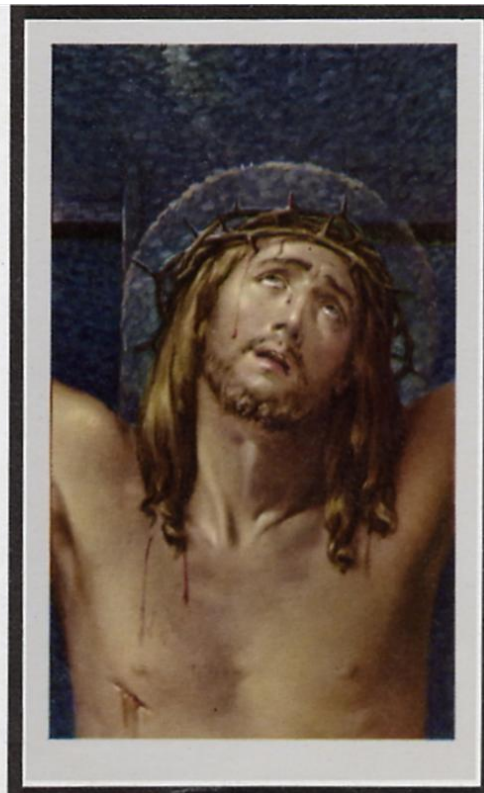
The back porch was full, the gallery was full, the mortuary chapel below was full and people waited outside.

The front row on the near side has Andrew McGarry head teacher of St Maurices High School, Mr Norman Hogg MP and Francis Griffin local Councillor. In the row behind Rev Alistair McLachlan, Minister of the Burns and Old Parish Church, Rev Mr Watson of the Anderson Church and many other church denominations are represented as well as representatives of the Jewish Community. Many representatives and dignitaries from civic life in Grangemouth are present too as well as two full rows of Nuns from the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and two visiting nuns from India.

This humble, unassuming, quiet, academic and intellectual priest inspired one of the largest congregations ever to assemble at St Patrick's since the Dumbreck pit disaster, such was the respect for the man.



This handmade scroll from the Parish was presented to Canon Kruger on his appointment to the Cathedral Chapter on being elevated to a Canon.



You are a priest for ever, a priest
like Melchisedech of old.



Please pray for the repose
of the soul of

Very Reverend

Canon Karl-H. Kruger

Parish Priest of St. Patrick's, Kilsyth

Born: 7th APRIL, 1924
Ordained: 17th JULY, 1949
Died: 24th MAY, 1989



All I ask of you is, that wherever
you may be you will remember me at
Holy Communion and before God's
altar.

—St. Monica.



*May he support us all the day long
till the shades lengthen
and the evening comes
and the busy world is hushed
and the fever of life is over
and our work is done.
Then in his mercy
may he give us a safe lodging
and a holy rest
and peace at the last.*

Cardinal Newman.



Canon Kruger's prayers card.