

PETER JENNINGS, KMCO

RIP, Tuesday 10th September 2013

An obituary note and funeral report by Kevin Grant KMCO, KFO.

Sunday 6th October 2013

Peter Jennings, Knight of Merit with Star of the Sacred Military Constantinian Order of Saint George, died at 12.05pm on Tuesday 10th September 2013 in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham after a long and exceptionally brave fight with leukaemia. He had met its onset with indignation rather than fear.

One of his last wishes, expressed the day before his death to his friend and professional colleague Kevin Grant, a brother Constantinian, was that the delegate, Anthony Bailey, be informed of how grave his illness was with the implicit wish that members of the Order should support him in prayer.

Peter died before this wish could be given effect, for a living Knight, but its poignancy especially invites the prayers of members of the Order for the repose of his soul.

Peter's Requiem was on Wednesday morning, 18th September, in St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, with the Archbishop of Westminster, Vincent Nichols, the Chief Celebrant and the Homily delivered by the Most Reverend Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham.

Peter had been press secretary to Archbishop Nichols throughout his years as Archbishop of Birmingham (2000-2009), and continued this service to Archbishop Longley when he succeeded Archbishop Nichols. Both men paid warm personal tributes to Mr Jennings. Archbishop Nichols, whose personal friendship with Peter extended over 40 years, said: "Over many, many years he sought to serve the Church well in the challenging world of the media. His great love of the Church was always his key motivation and his determination never faltered." Archbishop Longley added that he had been greatly saddened at the news of Peter's death; Peter had worked with great dedication and loyalty as his press secretary: "He loved the universal Church and he loved the local Church, too, especially in Birmingham, his home city."

Archbishop Nichols, who was first invested as a Constantinian in 1990, and is now an Ecclesiastical Knight Grand Cross of Grace welcomed by name two of Peter's brother Constantinians at the outset of the Requiem Mass; they were Kevin Grant, KMCO, KFO, officially representing the Order and Adrian de Redman, KM, KMCO. These Constantinians, wearing the cape of the Order, were placed at prie-dieus on the right between the congregation and the sanctuary, with representatives of the various Papal Orders of Knighthood ranged at prie-dieus facing them, to the left.

Peter Jennings had served the John Henry Newman Cause from the 'seventies onwards. He wrote the CTS pamphlet *Cardinal Newman, the Story of a Miracle*, giving a luminous account of the cure of Deacon Jack Sullivan which opened the way to the Cardinal being beatified in Cofton Park, Birmingham two years ago. This was an occasion of deep joy for Peter, and one to which he had made a real contribution. The book he edited in 2005, *Benedict XVI and Cardinal Newman*, was his pre-eminent input to this summit event.

He was a prolific author and was entrusted with writing and editing the official records of both Pope John Paul II's visit to Britain in 1982 and that of Benedict XVI in 2010, a tribute to his reliability and capacity to work at great speed, applying elbow and shoulder as required.

He was a leading philatelic journalist and author, his contributions to *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* and the Register pages of *The Times* being regular and authoritative. He was a Fellow of the Royal Philatelic Society London and was also made a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, a reward for his energy in travelling to the world's most exotic corners to advance the cause of philately.

Peter was an outstanding news photographer. It was a rare weekend that did not see his pictures featured somewhere in the Catholic papers and wider press. His particular art was in the composition and clarity of the inevitably static groups that make up religious picture stories. He would be busy around great ceremonies, unobtrusive but determined and would again and again capture the essential moment, the eloquent face, the mood of the event.

The death of Peter Jennings, a mettlesome and battlesome journalist of the old school who also coped energetically with the new ways, leaves a gap, a real silence, in the field of Catholic journalism.

He is survived by his wife, Stella, daughter Sarah and son Joseph.