

EVANS, ILLTUD (John Alban Evans) (1913 - 1972), Catholic priest

Name: Illtud Evans
Date of birth: 1913
Date of death: 1972
Parent: David Spencer Evans
Parent: Catherine Evans (née Jones)
Gender: Male
Occupation: Catholic priest
Area of activity: Religion
Author: Ruth Gooding

Illtud Evans was born on 16 July 1913, the son of David Spencer Evans, a postmaster, and his wife Catherine (née Jones). Despite being born in Chelsea, he came from Welsh nonconformist stock. His given names were John Alban. He attended Towyn Grammar School in Merionethshire, meaning that he grew up bilingual. He was also academically gifted; he entered St David's College Lampeter in 1931 as Bates English prizeman. Several College Magazines contain examples of his early writings. He also belonged to the college's Anglo-Catholic St David's Society. However, he was expelled from Lampeter in 1934 for homosexuality, having pleaded guilty to the charge 'of having persistently attempted to induce a fellow-student to commit an act of gross immorality', as noted in the minutes of the College Board which dealt with his case. His friend Cliff Tucker was later to campaign for him to have a posthumous graduation.

Evans's first career on leaving college was as a journalist; he was to use the skills he learned throughout his ministry. Around this time, he converted to Roman Catholicism; he entered the Dominican Order in 1937. He was ordained priest six years later, taking the name Illtud after the founder of the monastery at Llantwit Major, and was thenceforth known as Dom Illtud Evans.

Evans originally based himself in Cambridge. Then from 1955 to 1958, he served as prior of St Dominic's in north-west London. However, he was best known as a writer and broadcaster. He was editor of the Dominican monthly review *Blackfriars* from 1950 to 1962; he was then the driving force behind its relaunch as *New Blackfriars*. He also contributed to a variety of other publications: *Time and Tide*, *The Tablet* (often under the pen-name Aldate), *The Times*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, *Saturday Review* and *The Observer*. His writings encompassed a variety of subjects, including religious art, literature and biography as well as penal reform. His book, *One and Many* (*Blackfriars*, 1957), described Christ living in each Catholic, thus making the many into one.

Evans spent most of the 1960s in the United States. He lived first in New York, before becoming Preacher-General at the Dominican Provincial House of Studies, Oakland, California, in 1966. There he taught homiletics and conducted diocesan retreats. He was also associate editor of Faith Now.

From the beginning of his ministry, Evans had a particular interest in everything connected with crime and punishment; he visited prisons and rehabilitation centres all over Britain. In the US, this became his main preoccupation. He visited many penal institutions, while preparing a report on the operation of parole for the William J Kirby Foundation of Washington DC. He addressed the Annual Convention of the American Correctional Association in 1961 and was appointed as a delegate to the 1961 UN Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders. Evans's writings included a major article on 'Punishment' for *The Catholic Encyclopaedia*, vol. 11, published in 1969.

He also gained a reputation for helping priests who were disturbed by the changes brought about by Vatican II; he was often able to reconcile groups who were separated by differences of tradition, training and age.

Evans's health was never good; he returned to Britain in 1970 following a stroke. He died in Athens on 22 July 1972, aged only 59. He is buried in the Catholic cemetery at Heraklion. His papers are held in UWTSd's Special Collections.

Author

Ruth Gooding

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