

## Kenny, Augustus Leo (1863-1946)

Augustus Leo Kenny (1863-1946), surgeon and Catholic layman, was born on 29 July 1863 at Salford, Lancashire, England, son of Irish parents John Kenny, grocer, and his wife Mary, née Naughton. He migrated to Melbourne with his parents in 1870 and, educated by the Christian Brothers at Victoria Parade, East Melbourne, and by the Jesuit Fathers at St Patrick's and Xavier colleges, graduated from the University of Melbourne (M.B., 1885; Ch.B., 1886).

In 1886 Kenny was appointed first resident surgeon at the Eye and Ear Hospital, Melbourne. He proceeded to England in 1888 for further studies, becoming a member of the Ophthalmological Society of the United Kingdom. Returning to Melbourne, he was first honorary ophthalmic and aural surgeon at St Vincent's Hospital from 1893 until his retirement to private practice in Collins Street in 1908.

Kenny's influence on medical affairs in Victoria was profound. In 1899 he was a founder of the Ophthalmological Society of Melbourne. He was also elected president of the Victorian branch of the British Medical Association in 1899 and again in 1914. Honorary general secretary of the Australasian Medical Congress in 1923, he was a founder in 1927 of the (Royal) Australasian College of Surgeons, serving as first honorary secretary and treasurer and, until 1944, as a council-member. He was a member of the Medical Board of Victoria and official visitor to Melbourne mental hospitals.

Kenny was a sincere and pious Catholic devoted to the advancement of his Church. A prefect of the Professional Men's Sodality, he welcomed the second Catholic archbishop Dr Thomas Carr, a distant relation, to Melbourne in 1887. A confidant and adviser of Carr, he continued this close association with Archbishop Mannix despite publicly revealed differences of opinion during World War I on conscription and Irish independence. Kenny received the papal order of St Gregory the Great in 1888 and the grand cross of the order in 1929. He was an outstanding secretary of the Australasian Catholic congresses in 1900 and 1904 and in 1907 was appointed a papal chamberlain of cape and sword. **Kenny** was elected first president of the Cathedral Club for Men in 1903. He was a founder of the Victorian Catholic Federation and helped to found Newman and St Mary's colleges at the University of Melbourne. In 1939, as his last official role for the Church, he chaired the peace demonstration in May in the Exhibition Building.

Charitable, energetic and intelligent, Kenny lent his services to the general community. He was long a member of the Lord Mayor's Fund for Metropolitan Hospitals and Charities and in 1934 an executive member of the committee established for the centenary of Victoria celebrations. He was a long-standing member of the Melbourne Club. Interested in horse-riding and cricket, he also valued literature, painting, sculpture and music, being himself an accomplished pianist. He was appointed C.M.G. in 1938.

On 13 January 1892 at St Patrick's Cathedral Kenny had married Frances Monica O'Connor. She died, childless, in 1901, and on 10 July 1912 at St Patrick's Kenny married Olga Constance Mary Zichy-Woinarski, a well-known violinist. Kenny died at Kew on 27 September 1946, survived by the two sons and two daughters of this marriage. A portrait by John Hennessy is in the collection of the Historical

Commission of the Archdiocese of Melbourne and another, by Violet Teague, is held by Dr Elizabeth Kenny. An alabaster bust by J. W. Elisher is at Newman College.

Last updated 28 February 2025

Main source: T A Hazell, Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 9, 1983.

Draft compiled by Allan Mawdsley

Photo : Card 552 in AMA MSV collection

