

GAS Letter July 2008

Dear Fellow Members of the Guild:

I must begin by apologising for the last number of the Intercession Paper. Our good Father Lancaster had everything ready, along with two nice new photographs, one of the National Shrine and the other of St Stephen's, Providence, where our 2007 meeting was. Alas, the printer made a pig's breakfast of the whole thing, and the Intercession Paper, in order to be at all timely, had to go out in the old format. We rejoice to present this number to you with the omitted photographs and as the fruit of a new printer's labours. We hope it suits.

I write this letter to you by the light, as it were, of the Paschal Candle. The mystery of the Resurrection is at the heart of all we do and believe in the Guild. Many would be surprised to know that for most of the Guild's existence, its annual meeting and mass were in Eastertide and the mass was of a Paschal character, in white vestments, and with alleluias, not in fact a Requiem Mass at all. We also had a Requiem Mass later in the year in November, which from the 1950s until the early 1990s was often shared with the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. The point of all this is that our witness to the Communion of Saints, the Resurrection of the Body and the life everlasting is all solidly grounded in Our Lord's resurrection from the dead. The mystery of communion here on earth, synchronic communion if you will, is something which we humans often destroy. Through most of the Church's history its unity has been either sorely tested or broken. Since 1054, West and East have been rent asunder, and since the Sixteenth Century, the Provinces of Canterbury and York and their ministry throughout the English speaking world, has been rent asunder from the Universal Church. This sad disunity is manifestly contrary to the mind of Christ and its healing must be among our principal concerns of prayer and action. Diachronic communion, however, across time in the Church, is always maintained by the Holy Spirit, and the Church Militant of 2008 is one with the members of the Guild who are now in the Church Expectant in Purgatory or who have attained the crown of glory that fadeth not away in the Church Triumphant in Heaven. We cannot know of their progress, but we can share our hopes and our love for them with God always, and that is our ministry of prayer. We also witness to the Communion of Saints with regard to the saving merits of baptism in the Resurrection of Christ and in

the veneration and intercession of the Saints for us. We are all one family in the Risen Christ whether we be members of the Guild of the Nineteenth Century who have won the race that was set before them and are now with God, or whether we be the conspicuous Saints of God canonised by the Church in every age: Apostles, Confessors, Virgins, Widows, Martyrs, Doctors of the Church and even Our Lady, who is Queen of All Saints. We are all members of the one family of the Risen Christ and members of his mystical Body, the Church.

It is entirely possible that those who follow news of the Anglican Communion, and even more, those who spend time worrying about it, will find this a difficult time. That is undeniably so, and it requires our prayers. The Guild is not a political organisation and that is not its purpose, but as no one can pretend that we do not have our difficulties at present, we certainly unite in our prayers for the Anglican Communion and its right direction according to the mind of Christ. As I write this, New York and Washington have just had the inestimable benefit and blessing of a visit from the Holy Father, and along with Christians of every shade of belief in this country, we have been encouraged by it. I myself was privileged to be invited by Cardinal Egan to the Ecumenical Service with the Pope in April. His message, of some considerable theological content and ecumenical importance, was valuable and highly worthwhile in itself, but it was the Holy Father's presence and his constant exhortation over the week's events that remains with us. "Be of good courage! Christ is our Hope." The Guild of All Souls has no motto *per se*, but if it did, this would not be a bad one. It is what Our Lord said to the Apostles and the disciples over and over before his death and after his Resurrection. He has been the Way, the Truth and the Life for all Christians since the beginning, and he remains their Hope today. He is the hope of the Church Militant, making our way amid the sundry changes and chances of this life; he is the hope of the Church Expectant, waiting and being prepared for the full vision of His glory; he is the hope and glory of the Church Triumphant, who see his face always and rejoice to sit at his Wedding Banquet. Our baptisms, our Communion and our Confessions all bring us closer to this ultimate reality, we pray, and when we join these prayers with those of the Church in Heaven, praying for the Church in Purgatory, the Church across time is united and we are his Mystical Body. This is the Truth of the Resurrection, it is the reason that Christ is our Hope, and it is the reason why we may and should be of good cheer no matter how difficult or anxious life may seem for us, for the world or for the Church.

Our Annual Requiem for 2008 will be at the National Shrine at the Church of the Resurrection, New York, on Saturday, 8 November 2008. Particulars are elsewhere in this number of the Intercession Paper, and we hope many will be able to join us. For some years, there has been a sit down luncheon following the Guild Masses. This goes back to the days when there was a public meeting of all Guild members after the Mass, and the rigorous Eucharistic fast from midnight was always kept. As a result, if people were to remain after a Mass for a meeting, luncheon had to be served. As the Eucharistic Fast was mitigated as long ago as 1953, and as we no longer have a public meeting as such, it no longer seems necessary to have a sit down luncheon. There may be years in which this is desirable, but this will be at the discretion of the host Rector. This year, we expect to offer a very nice light buffet after the High Mass, but not a sit down luncheon. As a result, no reservations need be made. The Solemn Requiem Mass for the Guild's dead, especially those who have died since November 2007, will be offered, with very fine music from Resurrection's professional choir, and this year our preacher will be Father R. Trent Fraser, SSC, Rector of the Church of the Redeemer, Southfield, Michigan. At the Council Meeting in November 2008, four Council seats will be filled and as usual Officers will be elected.

Always remember that The Guild is here to serve you and your dead. You may request, at any time, a Requiem Mass to be said for any baptised person, whether a member of The Guild or not, and a mass card will be sent to give news of this to anyone you wish to be notified. (An alms of \$5.00 to the Guild is requested for this.) Likewise, you may request prayers at the National Shrine for any departed person (no alms necessary), and we have prayer cards from the National Shrine which can be sent to someone to announce that prayers have been offered. As has been the case for many years, you may also enrol any baptised person known to you (please no celebrities or political figures!), in the perpetual prayers of the Guild for an alms of \$20.00 to the Guild. The alms-giving is not to enrich the Guild but as a sign that your prayers involve a sacrifice not only of time and consideration but of your substance, as was done by Judas Maccabeus in the Book of Maccabees in Old Testament times, when he collected two thousand drachmas of silver to accompany the prayers for their fallen comrades.

Yours in the Holy Souls,

The Rev'd Canon Barry E. B. Swain, SSC  
Superior-General