

GAS Letter for July 2018 Intercession Paper

Dear Fellow Members of the Guild:

The July number of our Intercession Paper always begins with us looking forward to our Annual Requiem in November, and I hope that all who can will make plans to be with us for the next Annual Requiem at St Paul's Church, Clinton & Carroll Streets, in the neighbourhood of Brooklyn variously known as Cobble Hill and Carroll Gardens, on Saturday, 10 November 2018 at 11.00 a.m. At this writing, the music of the Mass has yet to be determined but I am quite sure that our fully professional choir under the direction of David Enlow, who is also a Guild Council member, will be more than up to the task. They offer sixty or so different mass settings every year, from Plainsong and Polyphony, Baroque music, Mozart and Haydn, some Nineteenth Century composers, and even some Twentieth Century composers, like Poulenc and Britten, and also cross-cultural pieces like the Russian Gretchaninoff masses and the Traditional melodies of the Belgian Congo which were worked into the Missa Luba by Father Guido Haazen, OFM. A luncheon will be served afterwards in St Paul's very attractive parish hall for those minded and able to remain. For those who do not know, St Paul's has a very long association with the Guild, our longest term Secretary-Treasurer General, Mr T. E. Smith, was a parishioner there for over fifty years, and Father Andrew Chalmers Wilson and Father Gregory Mabry were both Council Members for many years. St Paul's entered into very challenging times in the 1970s with a change in neighbourhood from Italian Roman Catholic with West Indians nearby to increasing crime and difficulty. The church congregation became very small until Father Sam Cross took over, and did so much to breathe new life into it. Father Peter Cullen, Rector for thirty years, has recently retired, who did so much to take loving care of St Paul's and its people. Two fires took their toll, but the building is as attractive and atmospheric today as ever, and has both stunning and interesting features and accoutrements. It is virtually unknown today outside its area and its own people, but it is a very important church, designed by Upjohn and full of the most lovely things that Father Wilson brought back from annual journeys to Europe. As soon as his liner docked on the West Side of the city, vans were appointed to come and collect the treasures brought for the church from Europe. I am more than a bit prejudiced, as this was the church that sponsored me for ordination (please do not hold that against them!), and I have many fond memories of it. Seminarians always have "ideal churches" in their minds they would be fantasy rectors of in the future, and St Paul's was certainly one of mine! Of course, God and circumstance take you elsewhere, and Man may propose, but God certainly disposes! My former curate, Father Sean Wallace, is at present priest in charge, so I have no doubt they are well served as they seek a new Rector in the time-consuming and laborious processes of our day.

I had occasion recently to look back at the Guild's history written by Dr Mark Wuonola in 1989, which I produced and saw through the press. Of course it was the tail end of the "hot type" era, and it required a press to set the text and photographs! To-day it looks rather primitive, but I think we can still stand by our work. (We still have them if anyone would like one!) One of the things that struck me in looking at the photographs and text is that what was current then has now blended seamlessly with what was then ancient history. Many of the figures who featured in the Guild's current life then are now in what one of them (Father Kunkel) always referred to as the "Unseen Kingdom".

As many of you know, I was once a Ph.D. candidate in Classics, and made my living teaching Latin and Greek to university students who were very keen, and Classical Civilisation in English to university students who absolutely were not keen! Plato says this:

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which means quite simply, “One cannot set foot twice in the same river...”. What the great philosopher is getting at here is that time is rushing past us and is never the same, though in many respects things may seem to be abiding. This is also a deeply Christian concept, “Time like an ever-rolling stream bears all its sons away, they fly forgotten as a dream dies at the opening day”. These are words of one of the most-cherished Anglican hymns, itself a paraphrase of Psalm 90 by Isaac Watts. It is therefore a Hebrew idea as well. If you are not fond of change, and I most certainly am not, this may seem alarming, but in point of fact it is reassuring as it reminds us that even though this is in fact true, that first of all, the river is flowing to God and carrying us to Him. The second reassuring fact is that even though the part of the Church that is the river we are in now is rushing away to God, and carrying with it our dear ones, whom we miss and mourn, nonetheless it is all one river, as it is all one Church. Those who are further along, and have been carried toward God, whether they have reached Him or not yet, are still in that same river, the Church, with us, and those who have not yet been born are further up the stream awaiting God to breathe life into them, and they will have their contribution to make to the Body of Christ. All this will continue, sanctified by the Holy Ghost, until Our Lord comes again to judge the quick and the dead and the world by fire. As the forty Eastertide draw to a close as I write this, we still celebrate Mass in the glow of the Paschal Candle and remember the Easter Vigil and indeed the Easter Sequence, “Speak, Mary, declaring, what thou sawest wayfaring. ‘I saw the tomb of Christ living – and likewise the glory of the Risen...’”

The closing words of the Easter Sequence stay with me always, and I often think of them when praying for the Guild’s dead and in saying Mass for them. “Yea, Christ my hope is arisen: to Galilee he goes before you. Christ indeed from death is risen, our new life obtaining. Have mercy, Victor King, ever reigning. Amen. Alleluia.” Remember, my dear brothers and sisters, he has gone to Galilee before us, he waits at the Wedding Feast of the Lamb, and he has triumphed over sin and death, that we may have the hope of doing the same. This requires the response of our best efforts at the Christian life, using the Sacraments, Scripture and our prayer life. But it also requires that after our own efforts have been brought to an end, that the faithful who remain exercise the spiritual work of mercy of praying for those who can no longer pray or do anything else for themselves, and why pray? Because God is never finished with us, and even after death gives us the chance to perfect ourselves and ready ourselves to be with him forever.

Yours in the Holy Souls,

The Reverend Canon Barry E. B. Swain, SSC
Superior-General

Annual Requiem Mass Of The Guild Of All Souls
Saturday, 10 November 2018 At 11.00 A.M.

St Paul’s Church,

Clinton And Carroll Streets
Brooklyn, New York

Sermon: The Father Superior-General

Music From Resurrection's Professional Choir To Be Announced

Luncheon Will Follow, No Reservations Required