

January 2014 Intercession Paper

My Dear Fellow Members of the Guild:

It is normally my custom to start with fulsome thanks and appreciation to our host rector from the previous November, but since that is I, it would seem a bit odd! In any case, many told me they were happy to be back at Resurrection after a two year absence. We met last year at All Saints', Ashmont, in Boston, with Father Michael Godderz as our host. Father Godderz celebrated and offered us a lovely day apart from the preacher's rather shockingly poor sermon, which, of course, was beyond the host's control. This year, as poor gratitude for his hospitality, I had asked him to preach, and he exceeded last year's effort by leaps and bounds. We are most grateful to Father Godderz for taking the time to be with us, as in addition to all the cares of a parish priest, he has also a capital campaign underway, and many and sundry building works going on which, as I can testify, try one to the very marrow! In addition to being Rector of Ashmont, he is also Master of the SSC in the Province of the Americas, which means (as it did with Father Walker), I am under obedience to him if we are talking about SSC, but he is under obedience to me if we are talking about GAS! The truth of the matter is he is a very long-time and treasured friend and one of the finest, most assiduous and sincere priests I know. He is also a lovely and charming person.

As is our custom, Resurrection offered the Traditional Requiem Mass from the English Missal in black vestments, together with the service usually referred to as Absolution at the Catafalque. This is becoming rarer and rare (I don't know why), and therefore it is our special duty to offer it, as we are three times this first part of November. The black vestments worn were the black silk velvet French Second Empire set with the silver bullion embroidery that is the property of the Guild and is worn at all GAS Requiems. We were also able to use Resurrection's spectacular black funeral pall, a product of the studios of Sir Ninian Comper from the 1920s. Father Anthony Symington, SJ, the world authority on Comper, pronounced it his finest pall still extant. Contrary to some ideas, the Guild sets down no particular form of the Mass to be used at its annual meeting, and in years past occasionally, the vestments have been black, white and once even violet! It need not be a traditional language mass, and we make no stipulations about the music. We

have had everything from the congregation itself singing plainsong to the most elaborate Mozart Requiem you can imagine.

This year, Resurrection's Choir under the baton of Mr David Enlow, outdid itself with Antonio Salieri's Requiem in C. If all you know about Maestro Salieri is the rubbish from *Amadeus*, the Broadway play, it will have been a revelation. Though no one can compete against Mozart successfully (even if Michael Haydn comes close), it is surprising how wonderful Salieri's Requiem really is, and many is the moment when one is transported to the "unseen Kingdom" by his gorgeous music. A large orchestra (including a bassoon perilously close to my head) accompanied Organ Scholar Colin MacKnight's playing the organ part. Several traditional hymns were sung, and then we had Absolution at the Catafalque.

The service of Absolution is really about saying good-bye to the deceased. In our own day, with cremation so prevalent, it is better if the body can be cremated after the service rather than before. In that way, before the body, created in the image of God, is destroyed by natural forces (either decomposition or fire), the Church Militant can bid good-bye to one of its own now moving on. It is a uniting moment when we all are praying for the happy repose of all the souls of the faithful departed, especially those whom we love dearest, those most forgotten, those most desperate, or those most in need of our prayers. If you want to think of it this way, the catafalque is really a post-box. Into it we have placed all our love letters to God for our dead, and in the service of Absolution, we send them to Him, asking him to take care of them, hoping and trusting that he will. When the priests circle with holy water then incense, we may imagine all our love letters to God about our dead rising up. It is one of the most beautiful moments of any funeral or Requiem Mass, it is the moment when we must say good-bye to a cherished and loved parishioner, and I confess it is the one moment when I find it hard to retain my composure. As a result, I am completely at a loss as to why it should be so in eclipse. (Though I could easily say that of so much else, too! I am hardly at the forefront of modern or popular culture.)

One of our Council seats fell vacant last November (but after the Council Meeting), the seat of Father Ralph T. Walker. For many of us, seeing Father Walker at Resurrection in 2011, reading the necrology as Warden (for what

turned out to be the last time) was a poignant moment. It was almost impossible not to wonder, and dread, that next year his own name might be found among those read in the Necrology. That was not the case in 2012, though in 2013, it is. I have eulogised Father Walker elsewhere, and we have had the opportunity to mourn in the Guild, in SSC, at St Michael & All Angels in Denver, and I suppose at Nashotah House too, but the prayers at the Absolution of the Catafalque and hearing his name in the Necrology remained quite meaningful.

I am delighted to be able to announce that Father Allan B. Warren III has accepted election as a member of the Council. I have been a friend and admirer of Father Warren's for many years, and remain so. It is said that the two people who really know a priest are his curate and his successors in his churches! I couldn't possibly comment on what my gathered curates would have to say about me, and I should probably be frightened to know, but I do know that I can say that Father Warren, my predecessor at Resurrection, has been in every respect helpful, kind and understanding. There must be many things I did which he questioned the wisdom of, but his conduct as a successor has been exemplary, so much so that I have often consciously tried to behave the same way to my successor at S. Clement's Philadelphia. I must say, too, that a letter he wrote to me at my Silver Jubilee was among the ones I have treasured the most.

Father Warren is a graduate of Princeton and The General Seminary and was ordained priest in 1973. After a brief time serving in South Carolina, he was curate of the Little Church here in New York 1974-1981 (to the wonderful Father Catir), and then three years Canon Pastor of the "American Cathedral" in Paris. Following this he returned to the States in 1984 to take over Good Shepherd, Waban, in Massachusetts, for six years, and then spent three years as assistant at the Church of the Advent, in Boston. In 1993, he was called to be Rector of the Church of the Resurrection, New York, then very much in the doldrums, and put six heroic years of hard labour into resuscitating it. In 1999, he was called to be Rector of Advent, Boston, and remains so. Back in the 1990s, he had a term as Council Member of the Guild, and I am delighted that he has accepted my invitation to return to the Council. This brings us to the full compliment of twelve trustees. The trustees manage the affairs of the Guild and are the only members of the Corporation, all others belong to the devotional society only.

Having had a lengthy discussion at last year's meeting where to go in 2014, we postponed deciding. As a ram in a thicket, Father Warren invited us to his wonderful church. As a result, we shall be going to the Church of the Advent, Boston, Massachusetts, for the Guild's Annual Council Meeting on Friday, 7 November, and the Annual Requiem for the Guild's dead, particularly those who have died during the previous year, will be Saturday, 8 November 2014. We hope that all of you who are members of the Guild either in New England or within striking distance on the East Coast will try to be present, as well as any others, not members, who would like to support the spiritual work of mercy in prayer for the dead.

With this number of the *Intercession Paper*, you will find that we have a selection of photographs of the Church of the Advent, not only in Father Warren's honour, but also hoping to convince some of his people to resuscitate his parish's branch, one of our very oldest (founded by Bishop Grafton) in the 1870s. It is therefore very precious to us, and it would be lovely to see it burgeoning again. The Guild has no political positions, and does nothing other than pray and teach. We teach nothing more or less than the doctrines contained in the Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, and we pray for not only the Guild's own dead, but the sick and those of your beloved dead for whom you request prayers. We also assist parishes in providing vestments and accoutrements necessary for requiem masses and funerals on request. Many disadvantaged parishes have so benefited. I have often pointed out that the Guild is perhaps one of the only groups in the church which is completely selfless – we do nothing for ourselves, only pray for others, and share with others the Gospel of the Hope of the Unseen Kingdom of Christ – Heaven itself, our own true native land.

As we near Christmas (or as you are already in Christmastide reading this), we naturally think of Love as it was Born in the manger at Bethlehem, which means "House of Bread". We also think of our Holy Communions and the Love of God coming to us in this form. In the Guild, we think of God's love and fidelity in not giving up on the Holy Souls, just because they have died. In many unusual, unexpected ways, love can start to grow up, sometimes in spite of ourselves. Frequently in life, when we are in anxiety, confusion, or even anger, God can break through to us through His Love shown to us in many ways, perhaps through our prayer life, perhaps through his Word, perhaps through the Seven Sacraments, perhaps through service to others,

perhaps through the Love of another. In a world which desperately needs this Love, the Guild can exercise its vocation best by pointing to the crib at Bethlehem and telling people, "There it is!" It is that Love that sees the Holy Souls through to Heaven.

Yours in the Holy Souls,

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