

GAS Letter for January 2016 Intercession Paper:

My dear Fellow Members of the Guild:

I normally begin this letter to you in January recording my thanks to our host in November and thanking him for a splendid job in welcoming us (for we always do receive princely welcomes!). This is somewhat otiose, not to say obnoxious, when it is I myself being congratulated by myself! I shall content myself therefore with thanking The Lord Bishop of Richborough for travelling across the seas from the Mother Country to visit us and preach for us as the President of the English Guild. Though the American Guild was given “independence” (why must it always be *that* word?!) as long ago as 1889, only sixteen years after the foundation of the Guild itself, our relations with the English Guild have always been very close. I believe I am correct in saying that all the English Presidents serving since the end of the War have visited the Guild in this country, and certainly Bishops Cyril Eastaugh, John Klyberg, Edwin Barnes, and Keith Newton, and Father Farmer, have done so in my own memory. Though Father Peter Laister never visited the American Guild as English President it was because his tenure was so short as he himself moved to America during his term, and immediately became a branch superior and a member of the American Council! So our connexion has remained close and we renewed it happily with Dr Banks’ very kind and gracious visit to us in November. We had a very large crowd of about 200, and most stayed to luncheon. I must also thank David Enlow, Organist and Choir Master of the Church of the Resurrection, for the magnificent Mozart Requiem offered on that occasion by our choir and quite a large orchestra. Mozart had last been offered as the musical requiem in 2002, also here, and though we have had many wonderful settings since then: Fauré, Duruflé, du Caurroy, Salieri, and Victoria among others, there is a universal appeal of the Mozart setting and from the first few bars of the Introit almost everyone knows exactly what it is: it could be nothing else. As I have said elsewhere, I have often enjoyed concert performances of Mozart’s Requiem, some with very famous soloists, choruses and orchestras, and it is quite wonderful. But hearing it in the Requiem Mass, the setting for which it was intended, with all the other pieces in play, and the prayer which rises around and through it, is a most moving experience which touches my soul in a way that the others don’t. This may be because Mozart and I share the same birthday, and I feel a special affinity to him! It may also be that I have just been in Salzburg this last summer, where his shade is everywhere.

The Council were very happy and interested in hearing the English President discuss the Guild in England and its work, and with his “other mitre” on as Bishop of Richborough, the Church of England in general, and the position of the Catholic minded of its clergy and laity. A number of changes have come to them which had previously come to us, in some cases many years ago, and so perhaps we were able to give him some advice and, I hope, solace.

One main change which the Council had been prepared for a year to discuss and decide was whether to amend the By-Laws to provide for a more expanded and diverse Council. The By-Laws provided for priests (or bishops) in communion with the Church of England who are “practicing Catholics” and accept without reserve the Guild’s aims and objects, and full traditional Catholic teaching with regard to the Creeds, the doctrine of Purgatory, and the ministry of the Sacraments of Extreme Unction, Requiem Masses, and general prayer for the souls of the dead. After taking soundings, we discovered that not only did the other devotional societies in this country (The Society of Mary, The Society of King Charles the Martyr and the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament) have laymen on their councils, but so did the Guild in England. The Guild was indeed founded by laymen in 1873, and for many years no clergyman could have *dared* serve on its Council since it would have resulted in immediate and draconian penalties. Things were not quite so dire in the Episcopal Church with regard to this opposition to prayer for the dead, and within a very few years of the American Guild’s independence, The Rt Rev’d Isaac Lea Nicholson, Bishop of Milwaukee, served as Superior-General. (Our church seemed to be obsessed with rooting out Eucharistic devotion rather than prayer for the dead!) As a result of this different line of development, the American Guild was always more clerical in its structure. For some time, some of us felt that it might well be desirable to have a cross-section of the Church serve on the Council, and add lay members. At its meeting in November, the Council voted unanimously to amend the By-Laws to permit this, and two lay members were elected to serve as the first of their kind. One is Mr Adam J. P. Barner, a vestryman and altar at Grace & St Peter’s, Baltimore, the Secretary of their Guild branch, and a longtime member and supporter of the Guild, also a member of the Council of the Society of Mary, and the Editor of their publication, the *AVE*. The other is Mr David Enlow, M.Mus.,F.A.G.O., my own Organist and Choir Master, who in addition to his musical genius, with his wife Loraine is also a member of our parish and a practicing Catholic himself. He has belonged to the Guild since he was 17. In addition to his work at Resurrection, he is a trustee of Resurrection Episcopal Day School, a member of the faculty of the Juilliard School of Music here in New York,

and the Dean of the New York Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, a signal honour in one so young. Each of these new members brings not only the lay perspective to the Council, but also very close association with church life in general, and for quite a long time with the Guild in particular. Both have been to nearly every Annual Requiem for many a year, and both are in their early 30s which brings the average age of our Council down quite a bit! We are very pleased that they have consented to be elected to full three-year terms which began in November.

Having suffered the death of our beloved Warden, Father Ralph Walker not too long ago, at an untimely age, the Guild began to pray for him on the “other side” as he had done so faithfully for others for so many years. We joined with the people of St Michael & All Angels Church in Denver mourning him, and the Guild’s Council donated a High Mass set of white vestments worked with images of St Michael on the cope hood and chasuble. Father’s successor there, also a member of our Council, Father Trent Fraser, assures me they are in regular use and were so used on their patronal festival in September.

Once we began to recover from the shock of Father Walker’s death, we assumed that it would be awhile before we went through such an experience again, but Man proposes, God disposes.

On 29 July occurred the death of Father Lane J. Davenport, a member of the Guild’s Council for several years, and the Rector of the Church of the Ascension & St Agnes, in Washington, D.C. We had had our Annual Requiem there twice in his time as Rector, and he was assiduous in being with us for the Council Meetings and Requiems wherever they were. We benefited from his wisdom and judiciousness and all of us considered ourselves friends of his, and felt privileged to do so. Father Davenport was far too young to lose, but had been battling cancer for some time, and was still in office at the time of his death. Naturally, the Guild joins together in praying for him, but also praying for his widow, Amy, and their son Tyler.

There had occurred just earlier the death of one of our sitting Council members who had served for a great many years, Father Richard Cornish Martin SSC. Father Martin, aged 78, died on 27 June. Father Martin was born in 1936 in Philadelphia. He was the son of the late Leon F. Martin and Virginia (Bullock) Martin, and grew up at St Barnabas’ Church, Germantown. He graduated from the Central High School of Philadelphia, and received the Bachelor of Arts in Science from the Pennsylvania State University. He received the Master of Divinity from the Virginia Theological Seminary, and the Doctor of Ministry from

the Howard University School of Divinity, Washington D.C. He was ordained to the Diaconate (1961) and to the Priesthood (1962) by the Bishop of Harrisburg. Father Martin began his ministry as Episcopal Chaplain to the Pennsylvania State University and Curate of St. Andrew's Church, State College, Pa. He was called to the Diocese of Washington to serve as Episcopal Chaplain to the George Washington University, and Curate at St. Paul's Church, K Street, where he had been a seminarian. He became Associate Rector of St. Paul's, and then third Rector of St. George's Church, Washington. He was then called to return to St. Paul's as its Eighth Rector. Prior to retirement, he was interim Rector of the Church of the Advent, Boston, Massachusetts. In retirement, he has been Interim Rector of St. Mark's Church, Charleston, SC; Interim Rector of Grace Church, Pittsburgh; and Assistant at St. Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue, New York. Most recently he served as Honorary Assistant at St. Timothy's Church, Raleigh. He was honored several times by nomination to the episcopacy (dioceses of Washington, Milwaukee, Botswana, and Northern Indiana). At the time of his death, he was also Deputy Master of the Society of the Holy Cross. Father Martin's funeral was at St Paul's, K Street, on 11 July. Father Martin had been a member of our Council back to the early 1990s, and a member back to the early 1960s. He was the senior priest in the Americas of the Society of the Holy Cross (SSC). He had celebrated his Golden Jubilee of ordination in 2012, and the Guild's Council had made him a gift of Low Mass vestments with Our Lady of Walsingham on them, particularly appropriate in view of his role as first Superior of the American Society of Mary, a post which he held for some forty years. This resumé of his life and ministry, while interesting and significant, does not begin to convey to one who never had the pleasure of meeting him, his charm, kindness and quality of friendship. I had myself known Father Martin for thirty years or more, and I often reflected on the fact that there were three priests I admired and respected, and if I could be *anything like* as good priests as they were, I would be grateful to God. One was Father Walker, and with Father Martin, a second has died. Father Martin's life was not all a bowl of cherries, and he encountered many difficult pastoral situations over his long ministry, and though he never mentioned it, I am sure many instances of race prejudice over his life, but his equanimity and peace of soul seemed never to be disturbed by evil forces, indeed, it was hard for him to believe that not everyone was as genuine, sympathetic and good as himself. I lived and ministered in Philadelphia for nearly fifteen years, and so often saw Father Martin when he was "home" visiting family and friends, and we knew so many people in common, all of whom treasured his friendship as much as I did, and do. He was very gracious in inviting me several times to preach at St Paul's, K Street, and later at the Advent, Boston, where I was

honoured to be among those who went there to support him in that new and rather daunting ministry after a period of significant upheaval there. He navigated that ministry with all the grace and dedication he showed all his life, and the Guild, the Episcopal Church, the SSC, The Society of Mary, and each member of the Council personally, are poorer for his loss.

The story has been told of many other priests, including Fathers Milburn and Joiner, but I thought of it when I heard Father Martin had died. Father Martin, upon being released from purgatory, presented himself at the pearly gates of Heaven. When St Peter asked his name, he replied, Richard Cornish Martin, priest of God. St Peter went to consult with Our Lord, whose ears pricked up immediately on hearing his name, and said, "Oh for heaven's sake, yes, let him in, my Mother has been talking about nothing else since he died!" As irreverent as that may be, I have no doubt that Our Lady sprang into action the moment he left this life, after all, their friendship is long and deep, and many was the soul in the Episcopal Church who would never have known about her at all, nor known the balm of prayer to, through and with her, had they not heard about it from Father Martin. Father is survived by his sisters, his niece and nephew, and by thousands and thousands of people who were privileged to see a sliver of heaven through his preaching, his pastoral ministry and his own life.

The deaths of these two fine priests who had both been part of our work in the Guild reminds us of the mystery of death itself. So much of Christianity is made up of paradoxes, as Our Lord reminded us often, and at its very heart are the most important ones: a little baby was born and wrapped in swaddling clothes who was God Himself, and Christ rose from the dead to destroy Death and to bring new and unending Life in Him. We should not, therefore, be surprised that in dying, we are presented with yet another paradox. As people, we naturally grieve for those whom we love but see no longer, those who now worship on another shore and whom we hope to see again. In some cases that grief is mitigated by the knowledge that a long and painful illness is ended, or joy that a very long life has been lived happily and for God and is now ended just as it should have. In other cases, the grief is intensified because it is a violent death, someone has died at an age at which it is not expected, or someone has died on whom many depended and are now bereft. All of this is very difficult, and it is what makes death solemn. It is a serious business, it is not frivolous, and it does not deserve to be treated like a variety show, a comedian's schtick, a programme of "favourite music", or a display of photographs of happy days from the past, now irretrievably gone. Death is final and solemn and affecting, and it deserves to be acknowledged in that way. Any psychologist will tell you that that is the

first step in grieving, and accepting what has happened. What goes on at many modern “memorial services” is a complete denial of death, and involves the Church in complicity with the undertakers’ business of disguising death and making it look and sound like an afternoon nap.

That is the one part of the paradox. The second is that, as St Paul says, we do not weep as others who have no hope. Though death is solemn, sombre, affecting and sometimes even violent or tragic, there is always the ray of light that begins to shine in when we think of the Resurrection. If you want to try to think of this in a particular way, you might remember that moment in the Easter Vigil when the Sacred Ministers walk down the aisle in darkness, all is quiet, there is no light, but a great sense of anticipation. It looks like Good Friday continues to reign, but the first thing the Celebrant does is kindle and then bless the new fire. In the slight light of the new fire, what can we see? Forms and suggestions that Good Friday and Death are over – flowers, decorations, and signs that everywhere in the church, hiding under the darkness are signs of Easter, of new life. It is so with every death. We cannot be sure that Person X, Y, or Z has been admitted to heaven, and declarations of that nature are absurd, misleading and wicked, because they lead people to ignore praying for the dead and lead to a feeling that they are absolved from any part in this matter. What we can be sure of, and this is already a great wonder, that new and unending Life in Christ has been made *available to us*, and that God wants to do everything he can for us to take advantage of his gracious invitation to the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. The ancients realised this when they thought that once the dead came to the bank of the Styx and waited for Chiron, the ferryman, to ferry them across, they had no more ability to change their fate. The die was cast. Such is not our lot. Perhaps it is true that once we die, *we* can do nothing further, but your friends, relations and those pledged to pray for you *can and should*, and in any case, God has promised that even after death, he is not finished with us. Remember that the grave is not only the gate of death but also the bed of hope, and it was only through earthly death that Our Lord came to Resurrection and changed the whole of creation forever.

Yours in the Holy Souls,

(The Rev’d Canon) Barry E. B. Swain, SSC,

Superior-General