

## **GAS Letter for January 2020 Intercession Paper**

Dear Fellow Members of the Guild:

My letter in the January Intercession Paper always begins with my thanks, usually fulsome and deserved, to our hosts in November. Our Annual Requiem at the Church of the Advent, Beacon Hill, in Boston, was at the invitation of the Senior Warden, C. Thomas Brown, Esq., as they are in an interregnum created by the retirement of our Council Member, Father Allan Warren after a distinguished and successful incumbency stretching back twenty years. We are very grateful for their gracious welcome, both for the Council Meeting in the church's Library on Friday night, and for the Solemn Requiem Saturday morning. The Advent's justly renowned Choir acquitted themselves beautifully as ever, and the "home team" in the sanctuary together with Council Member and Boston neighbour (also sometime curate there) Father Michael Godderz SSC acting as Deacon for us. A luncheon followed in the church's hall.

The Advent has hosted several meetings of the Guild in the past, including the Easter Fiesta, 1955, (Celebrant: Father Peter Blynn, Curate, Advent, Boston; Sermon: Father Franklin Joiner, Rector, S. Clement's Philadelphia, Superior of the Guild), the Easter Fiesta, 1993, (Celebrant: Father Swain, Rector, S. Clement's Philadelphia and Warden of the Guild ; Sermon: Father Andrew Mead, Rector, Church of the Advent), and most recently the Annual Requiem, 2014, (Celebrant: Father Warren, Rector Church of the Advent; Sermon: Father Swain, Rector, Church of the Resurrection New York, and Superior-General of the Guild). Earlier Masses & Annual Meetings (about which we know nothing other than the date) were held in 1894, 1903, and 1916. I have therefore preached at two of these, and sung the Easter Fiesta Mass at the third. The principal feature of the 1993 visit was the fire alarm going off, summoning the Boston Fire Department, all of whom were Irish and very respectful, but Dr Ho and her Choir found this exercise less than necessary and somewhat inhibiting of their efforts. The luncheon was served in the Garden and Mr Carter George, their long-time branch secretary, presented several new members. I also admitted some new members, mostly from Advent, but also St Stephen's Providence, in 2014.

The Advent Branch of the Guild, dedicated to St John the Baptist, was established in 1880 by Father Charles Chapman Grafton SSJE, Rector, who was a member of the Guild's Council as Rector of the Advent, and throughout his entire reign as Bishop of Fond du Lac (1888-1912). Advent's Branch of St John Baptist is among the older ones of the American Guild, and was established just seven years after the Guild was founded in England in 1873, and before the American Region was "granted independence" in 1889 (presumably that declaration would have warmed the hearts of Bostonians!). The Advent was an integral part of the Guild's life in America until the mid-1960s. As with other churches of long tradition, a renewal of interest has come in the new century. As their search committee continues its work, the Guild adds its prayers to those of its congregation and many friends far and wide, praying for a wise and successful choice which will keep the Advent's long Catholic tradition firmly in place.

At its Annual Meeting the night before the Mass, the Guild's Council re-elected Fathers Swain, Lutz, Warren and Pham, to new three-year terms. Father Richard H. Lutz SSC was re-elected Warden, and your humble servant was re-elected Superior-General, both of us for one-year terms as is specified in the By-Laws. Father Lutz has now been Warden for these seven years since Father Walker's death, and I have been a member of the Council since 1988, and Superior-General since 1997. In an amusing aside, Father Warren graciously offered to retire from the Council as he is now retired, but we begged him to stay on as *éminence grise* (one of several!) to which he happily assented. I was discussing this matter on the telephone with another Council member, and to my amusement I was overheard and the auditor was convinced I was discussing *Senator Warren* and her campaign efforts for November. Same surname, same state, different people, different election!

Having reported to you about our Annual Mass and Council Meeting, we now look forward to a new venture and one about which the Council is most excited and enthusiastic. For a while now, I have been occasionally

meeting with and having a prayer service with a group of Christians whose misfortune it has been to lose a relation or friend in the very long military engagement of the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan and who live on the Upper East Side. This has lent new poignancy, alas, to the services remembering the war dead in November, which have always been entirely consonant with the Guild's ministry. During the entirety of the Great War and the Second World War throughout (1939-1945), the Guild in England and in the United States included the names of members who had died on active service and also, often, the children and grandchildren of members, who enrolled them posthumously.

It occurred to me through this involvement that many people, having no regular church involvement, and not being able to draw on any particular theological underpinning of death and resurrection beyond a vague Christian understanding, are more than a bit at sea about how to integrate their remembrance of their war dead and their grief with their Christian faith. It also occurred to me that this could be an important subsidiary ministry of the Guild, one that would widen its appeal and outreach.

As a result, and with the enthusiastic support of the Council, the Guild will henceforth make this a part of its ministry in these ways. The first is that this smallish group (which in the country's largest city could obviously become far larger) and its meetings of prayer and remembrance would be an outreach of the Guild, rather than the Church of the Resurrection, which makes sense as few, if any, have come to any services of our parish church, and a few are actually involved in other churches which are unresponsive to prayer for the dead. In response to this, we have decided to dedicate a small area of my church, which is of course the National Shrine of the Guild, to this particular ministry and a plaque will be affixed there remembering the war dead, particularly those of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, without specific reference to the parish church but involving **all the war dead** of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. (We already have a plaque in the stairway from the beginning of the church honouring the Civil War veterans of the Seventh Regiment from this church who returned from the war with their Chaplain, our Father Founder, and helped start this church. In any case, that war is rather remote now in personal memory.) We have it in mind not only to remember the war dead there, but also those who have returned from these conflicts wounded in mind, body, and spirit. In addition to the plaque, a small figure of St George, the patron saint of soldiers, will be a place marker for this devotion. As many of you will have observed in many churches, people find lighting candles very comforting, even if they are not Catholics or even Christians. There are two sets of votive candles quite nearby already, so we hardly require another, and they will be handy for those who visit for this purpose.

Our other course of action will be to begin a list in the Intercession Paper specifically consisting of any of the 21<sup>st</sup> century war dead whom people would wish to enroll, which will be printed separately from the ongoing Chantry List. We shall also include henceforth in the Intercession Paper prayers for the wounded and the dead which we hope will be used by all members as an optional extra from time to time. An advertisement of these matters will be added to our website, and notice will be placed in *The Living Church* introducing to church people this addition to our work of prayer.

It is important to note that this work of prayer for those wounded and killed in these long conflicts of our own time, which continue, has no political purpose. It is clearly not the Guild's business to endorse wars or oppose them, or indeed any particular foreign policy. Our concern here is clearly with human beings, children of God, and service men and women of this country or indeed of our allies (most pertinently for Anglicans obviously the United Kingdom and Canada), who have returned wounded or reduced in any way, and the dead themselves. Christians are never in the business of glorifying war, and the Guild is certainly not in the business of advocating or opposing specific American foreign policy, as should be obvious. What IS our business is praying for those who have offered, entirely voluntarily, to serve in these conflicts with the intention of guarding the safety of our country, only to return wounded or not at all.

Now what can YOU do, as members of the Guild, to help in this endeavour? The answer is obviously to pray, along with everyone else, but also if you know a departed member of our armed forces or one of our Allies who has been killed in these conflicts, or one suffering from its effects who needs our prayers, you can now

offer to them or their loved ones this opportunity of prayer and support. We cannot, obviously, pray by name for everyone who has died in these conflicts in the armed forces of Great Britain, Canada and the United States, or even just those of our own country. There are, tragically, thousands. What we CAN do however, is pray for those who request it, or have it requested for them, and you can offer this idea and possibility to any you may know who have returned wounded or are struggling, or to any you know who have lost loved ones. I suspect many of us would be surprised at just how comforting it is, even if the theology of it is not entirely understood or identical to that of Catholic Tradition, that a group of Christians are prepared to pray, selflessly, for them or those dear to them.

When I was a Chaplain at St Luke's Hospital in Morningside Heights across the street from our Cathedral Church of St John the Divine some years ago when it was still a church hospital, it was a rule, which went back to Father William Augustus Muhlenburg, (the founder of the Church of the Holy Communion here, and the Sisterhood that began there and flourished for many years, and St Luke's Hospital), that a chaplain be present every time a person was dying in the hospital, and recite prayers he had written for this purpose. Of course, he had to write these prayers in Tudor English because the Anglican Church at that time did not, and would not, pray for the dead, hence the foundation of our Guild. The several of us Chaplains did this in our own wards during the day, and the night chaplain did so on call throughout the hospital and in the Emergency Room. In the beginning, I was somewhat wary of how this would be received, as there were many patients who were either of another religion (Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, etc) or of none. We were instructed to say the prayers outside the room if we knew the family to be of another religion or hostile to ours. I can tell you that in an entire year, I was asked into the room every single time but twice. On all these occasions, the family and friends present were extremely grateful for this ministry, whether they shared our beliefs or not. What they appreciated, and greatly it seemed, was that there was someone there who **cared** about their loved one who lay dying and was prepared to pray for him or her. I have never forgot how much good this did, and I hope that the Guild may well be able to provide something of the same to those in need of it.

Yours in the Holy Souls,

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

*A prayer for those wounded in mind, body or spirit in conflict*

O Father of mercies and God of all comfort, our only help in time of need; We humbly beseech thee to behold, visit, and relieve thy servants returned from conflict and service to their countries who are wounded or reduced in mind, body or spirit, for whom our prayers are desired. Look upon them with the eyes of thy mercy; comfort them with a sense of thy goodness; preserve them from the temptations of despair; and give them patience under their afflictions. In thy good time, restore them to health, and enable them to lead the remainder of their lives in joy and peace, with a spirit of forgiveness and mercy, the knowledge of the gratitude of the many they have served, and all to thy grace and glory. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*A prayer for those who have died in armed conflict, especially those of this century*

O Almighty God, grant we beseech thee to bless the memory of those who have died in the service of their country, Grant to them perpetual light, refreshment and peace in thy presence. Forgive, we beseech thee, any ill they may have done, and bless them for the good they have done and evils they have endured. Bring them at last, we pray, to thy love and glory, Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.