

GAS Letter for January 2022 Intercession Paper

Dear Fellow Members of the Guild:

Our Annual Requiem was scheduled to be at my own Church, the Guild's National Shrine, and was able to take place as scheduled, in a much more hopeful time than November 2020. It was, however, much like last year, in that the Council meeting was a blend of some in person, and most online. Given the miracles of modern technology (let us leave the curses aside for a moment), we conducted the Guild's Council Meeting electronically on Friday, 12 November. We were grateful to be able to do both, the Council meeting on the inevitable Zoom, and the service on our own in-house system which we use every Sunday and feast day High Mass.

Though this method of hearing Mass cannot be compared to the real thing, and cannot provide for receiving Holy Communion, it is certainly a very worthy activity and we were grateful to be able to offer this. As a result, 2020 and 2021 may well have had the largest attendance at an annual Requiem for many years, given the ease of attending for people. I can certainly without fear of reproach thank the professional Church of the Resurrection choir under the direction of Maestro David Enlow, who is also a Guild Council member, and Resurrection's Organist and Choir Master, who offered Heinrich Biber's Requiem, which we believe to have been a North American premiere. I hope that many of you were able to watch this broadcast, and if you did not do so live, it can be seen at any time on Resurrection's Facebook, Vimeo and YouTube archives. Since it is not attached to a feast, there is no fear of it becoming outdated! If you have not yet seen it, please look for it on the Church of the Resurrection's broadcast networks: Facebook, YouTube and Vimeo. There will also be links to it on the Guild's website, www.guildofallsouls.net

At the Council meeting on Friday evening, the Council re-elected Canon King, Father Godderz, and Messrs Barner and Enlow to new three-year terms, and all four of the officers, Father Lancaster as Treasurer-General, Mr Barner as Secretary-General, Father Lutz as Warden, and your humble servant as Superior-General to one-year terms. I shall have reached twenty-five years in office in November 2022 as Superior-General, but still am behind Father Larrabee, who served twenty-eight years in office (1894-1924) whilst Rector of the Ascension, Chicago, and well behind my double predecessor, Father Franklin Joiner, who served thirty-five years as Superior-General 1924-1958, and was also my predecessor as Rector of S. Clement's Philadelphia from 1920-1955. The Council was also delighted to receive the report from the Secretary-General, Mr Barner, that some twenty new members had been admitted in 2021.

The Council also voted to create the Father Joiner Fund, which aims to pool resources of various Catholic sources, to helping struggling churches which have so zealously kept the Faith. Several other Catholic societies, churches, priests and laymen have expressed interest in joining in this endeavour, and if you wish to contribute, simply send your cheques to the Guild of All Souls Treasurer at the address at the front of this paper, and mark it "Fr Joiner Fund".

I have been thinking about the response of the Church to the Black Death in the Middle Ages as opposed to the response of both the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic Church to the Corona Virus in the last almost two years. I realise completely that we know much more now about his this all works, and that processions of large numbers of people would not be beneficial!

But it did strike me that the immediate response in the fourteenth century in the plague which is estimated to have killed 200,000,000 in Europe, Asia and North Africa, as opposed to the current death total for COVID of 5,000,000, was to minister to the sick and the dying as best they could, and to open the churches for Masses and prayers at a very harrowing time. In 2020, it was to close churches, keep people away from them, and stop the Sacraments from being given at all. Many bishops, especially in England, threatened to put priests on trial for doing anything priestly. It was much like the mediaeval interdicts which Popes imposed when furious with a country, which ended all Sacraments until it was lifted. We reached the height of this frankly bizarre response with the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of All England, saying his Easter Mass at his kitchen table. At least the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster said a private Mass with one server at the altar of his metropolitanical Cathedral.

We did not, of course, any of us, wish to be the carriers of contagion from sick person to sick person, but complete closure of churches, and under decrees made by secular authorities at that, was the furthest point at the other end of the scale. Bishops in both churches in many countries immediately jumped on the bandwagon, and seemed (many of them, not all) to have as their chief goal the denial of all sacramental and even prayer life in public at a time when they were most needed. I do not think this will be forgotten by people. They were taught a very important lesson, and a pernicious one: when things are difficult, do not count on the church because it, too, will be closed. Another lesson was that praying at home alone or reading your Bible alone, or watching church services online, were in some way equivalent to attending church services and receiving the Sacraments. Messrs Knox and Calvin and the Puritans must have felt triumphant, if they got to know of this, wherever they are.

I know it was a difficult time when this all started, and none of us knew exactly what to do, and the ground underneath seemed to shift like sand with new information coming all the time, much of which was contradictory to what we thought we knew. Clearly, also, none of us wished to endanger anyone's health unnecessarily, but surely there was a middle ground there, and indeed in the Diocese of New York, we found it in July 2020. But the premise that the Church was to excuse itself from being involved in the entire sad and tragic adventure, strikes me as a very serious and highly questionable response to the Gospel imperatives. Yes, it could be that attending a Mass might expose people to infection, that is true. But it is also true that going to grocery and drug stores (and I might add, *liquor stores*, which were also regarded as essential), could do the same thing and to the same effect. Indeed, few churches could have commanded a congregation the size of most crowds in grocery stores, and I am reliably informed that on Christmas Eve around six o'clock, there were nearly a hundred people in a nearby liquor store, much smaller than my church and with no proper ventilation. There certainly were not a hundred people here in church, and most Anglican churches in the city remained closed at that time (whilst the Roman Catholic Dioceses of New York, Brooklyn and Newark all remained open doing heavy business). Is there a lesson for us here?

Yours in the Holy Souls,

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

T. E. Smith, Secretary-General of the Guild of All Souls 1898-1941

(This first is an extract from Dr Mark Wuonola's 1991 history of the Guild of All Souls' American Branch, which is still available.)

“Father Franklin Joiner (Rector of S. Clement’s Philadelphia 1920-1955, and Superior-General of the Guild of All Souls 1925-1958) wrote, ‘My earthly ideal of the priesthood has always been the late Father Larrabee, sometime Rector of the Church of the Ascension in Chicago, and Dean of Nashotah House during my residence there from the Autumn of 1915 until the early summer of 1918. When Father Larrabee died, I was chosen to be the Superior-General of the Guild of All Souls in this country, an office which he had held with distinction for many years. To me it was a greater honour to be Father Larrabee’s successor than it was to head the Guild. At this time, T. E. Smith was Secretary of the Guild, and during his lifetime my office was purely nominal, but since Mr Smith’s death the full responsibility of the Guild of All Souls has rested upon me, and its work has now come to be associated with ‘2013 Apple Tree Street’ (S. Clement’s Clergy House).

In the work of the Guild, I have the able assistance of Miss Marian Thompson, a member of the parish, and I am pleased to say that the Guild continues to grow and flourish.’ ”

“It was noted in the chapter on the Foundation of the Guild in England that the foundation and work of the Guild there has been very much an achievement of the laity. Many examples of this same lay dedication abound in the work of the Guild in America, but none is so great as the example of T. E. Smith. He was truly one of the stalwarts of the Catholic Movement as well as of the Guild’s particular work during his life. Father Joiner referred to him as “the Guild’s most notable member”.

“The Rev’d Leslie J. A. Lang, writing in 1988, recalled T. E. Smith, whom he first met in about 1926. Mr Smith had motored over to Bard College in a chauffeur-driven car, from his home on the west bank of the Hudson, near Kingston, where he was a member of Holy Cross Church, of which Father Mabry was Rector. Although “T. E.” was well-to-do at that time, he apparently lost everything in the Depression and moved to Brooklyn, living in an apartment in a large old house and holding a modest job in a law office. Mr Smith had a son, T. E. Junior, from his first marriage. After his first wife’s death he married her niece, Lillian, by whom he had another son, Duane, named after his ancestor for whom Duane Street in New York is named. Oddly, Father Mabry came to St Paul’s, Brooklyn, about the time T. E. Smith moved there. Father Lang knew him during the years 1931-1934, while he was at General Seminary, and then as Deacon, at St Paul’s. He wrote, ‘T.E. knew by name and reputation, or had met, almost everybody connected with the Catholic Movement of his time. He never forgot anything and also knew everything, in every detail, especially in the American Church. In that sense, he never grew old, mentally. He was pleasant, kind, gentlemanly, talkative, inquisitive, and sometimes just a little boring, if you weren’t a keen Anglo-Catholic of the St Paul’s Brooklyn – Saint Clement’s Philadelphia – St Mary the Virgin company. In those days, we fresh seminarians had names for all the eccentrics – “Hail Mary Drysdale”, “Pray for us Morris”, and “Purgatory Smith”. T. E. was one of those who made the movement exciting and colourful...’ ”(Father Lang died in 1990, having been Rector of St Edward the Martyr and of Intercession in New York, and St Peter’s Westchester Square in the Bronx, and a long-time honorary assistant at the end of his life at St Thomas’ Fifth Avenue.)

“T. E. Smith can rightly be regarded as the model of the Catholic layman, for he was in the world but not of the world. Although he held a secular job, and was no stranger to adversity – the Depression and the Death of his first wife of Spanish Influenza in the epidemic of 1918 – he always continued his work for the church and the Guild.”

What follows is from Father Mabry’s article of 1942 regarding T. E. Smith’s death, which is truly moving:

“As was his unflinching custom, Mr Smith made his monthly confession on the Eve of All Saints. He then went home to help prepare a special Hallowe’en party for poor children with his neighbours. The next morning he received the Blessed Sacrament, which was to be his Viaticum, at Solemn Mass at seven o’clock. That evening, I spoke with him over the telephone about some arrangements for All Souls Day, and found him looking forward to it with great enthusiasm which, because it fell on Sunday this year (1941) was to be transferred as always to Monday. He arrived on Sunday morning to make his usual semi-weekly Communion. As he was prostrating himself before the Eucharistic Presence of Him whom he had so long and lovingly adored and for whom

he had so faithfully labored, his soul took flight from the body. He died instantly. You see he had made his Confession, he had received his Viaticum the day before, he was prepared to receive Holy Communion that morning and he was genuflecting, which certainly meant that his last thought was of Our Lord. He died as he had lived! What a glorious death! Who could wish for more? (He died on Sunday, 2 November 1941; on 5 November Father Joiner sang the Burial Requiem for Mr Smith, with Father Mabry as Deacon of the Mass.)”

“His body was immediately laid in St Michael’s Chapel at St Paul’s, and there it remained through the remaining Sunday Masses and the many Masses on All Souls’ Day. After the last Mass that day, we had it placed on the Catafalque before the High Altar, to rest there during the Low Masses the next morning. I am happy to say that his family and I maintained the same dignity for him in his death that he had always cultivated during his life. There were no sentimental flowers, nor corpse-gazing, and finally the burial that Holy Church intends for her own, the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Absolution at the Catafalque. A life of great fidelity and a glorious death! I thank God I have been privileged to witness both.”