

GAS Letter July 2013

Dear Fellow Members of the Guild:

As I am writing this now, it is the second half of May, and spring has finally sprung in New York. As you read it, it will be the middle of summer! One thing that always happens in May is May Festivals of Our Lady. This is true in all three churches I have served, and may well be the case in yours too. In addition to parish festivals of this kind, there is the Annual May Festival of the Society of Mary. The Society of Mary, one of our sister Catholic devotional societies, came together in England in 1931 when two societies, the Confraternity of Our Lady, founded in 1880, and the League of Our Lady, founded in 1902, merged. The American Region began in 1962 when a group of American priests who belonged to the Society in England petitioned for permission to form an American Region.

It is difficult to imagine, but quite true, that when, as a college freshman in 1977, I wrote to the Society of Mary, to the magnificently named Tipton Marshall Queen Westfall, who was then secretary, and is now long departed from this life, the American Superior was...Father Richard Cornish Martin! He has been the guiding light of the Society of Mary all those years and longer, and in fact for many people, quite simply, he has *been* the Society of Mary in this country. Many is the church, whether long-time Catholic parish like St Stephen's Providence (where this year's festival was held) or my own, or churches where Our Lady is first being tentatively introduced to the congregation, where Father Martin has been her harbinger. He has preached in all three of the churches I have served over my twenty-five years as a priest, and every time he has preached, either in my church, or in Synods and Chapters of the SSC, at annual Requiems of the Guild of All Souls, or at meetings of the Society of Mary, the same response has always come from the auditors: a gracious welcome to a gracious message about the Woman full of Grace.

It is not for me to comment on his tenure as American Superior-General. What I am qualified to comment on is Father Martin personally. Having known him now roughly thirty years, I can say unequivocally that I have never heard him raise his voice in anger, I have never heard him criticise another priest or layman, I have never witnessed him being other than gracious to anyone even the most offensive or mad people. This is an extraordinary statement to be able to make of any Christian, and I believe very firmly that it is so with him because Our Lady has been his friend, and his constant guide to Her Son. In this month of May, when Our Lady is crowned in parish churches, convents and great Cathedrals throughout the world, let us pause for a moment to give thanks for the witness and example of Richard Cornish Martin, Priest, much of whose life and priesthood has been accompanied by the simple and humble act of crowning her with his love and devotion, and encouraging thousands to do the same. Many would never have known her without his example, his dedication and his witness. His role on the Council of the Guild of All Souls has been similarly gracious, devout and faithful.

We are delighted that the connection with the Society of Mary and the Guild of All Souls will be continued, as our Council members, Father John Alexander SSC, Rector of St Stephen's, Providence, R.I., has been chosen as Father Martin's successor. I am quite sure that Father Alexander, having assumed this mantle, will do a marvellous job but I am equally sure he would join me in saying that Father Martin is one of a kind.

I am printing elsewhere in this number of the *Intercession Paper* an article about funerals by the well-known English author A. N. Wilson, which appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* awhile ago. Mr Wilson once studied for the priesthood at St Stephen's House, Oxford, and while one gathers that he has travelled a ways from the Faith since then, he has some trenchant, interesting and valid observations about funerals (and weddings) in the Anglican Church to-day. Though written specifically about England obviously, there are all too many resonances with the American Episcopal Church. The article speaks for itself, but I thought our membership would find it interesting.

In the January issue, I always look backward and thank our hosts for the Annual Mass and Council Meeting in November, whilst in July, I look forward and give news of the same function forthcoming. Our Annual Requiem Mass this year will be Saturday, 9 November, 2013, at my own Church of the Resurrection in New York. We have not been at Resurrection for a few years, and the Council felt it would be nice to return to the Guild's American shrine church. The congregation will be delighted to welcome you, I assure you, and we look forward to a happy, edifying and devotional day. I had hoped that the Lord Bishop of Richborough, the President of the English Guild, might be with us, but the press of affairs for him at that time this year precludes this. The Bishop (The Rt Revd Norman Banks, sometime vicar of Walsingham) hopes he may be able to be with us in 2014. Our preacher this year will be Father Michael Godderz, Rector of All Saints', Ashmont, Boston, and the Master of the SSC in the Province of the Americas, which includes the whole of North America and the West Indies (and even one priest in Peru!). Father Godderz always provides a good and thoughtful sermon. Our own Organist and Choir Master, Mr David Enlow (himself a member of the Guild) will play and conduct our Choir offering Antonio Salieri's *Requiem*. This is a fascinating and lovely piece, and if you are interested in the relationship between Mozart and Salieri (apart from Broadway's idea of it in *Amadeus!*), you will find it very interesting to compare their two Requiems. Combined with, we expect, a delicious lunch, it should be a lovely occasion. If it is at all possible for you to consider being in New York for the Annual Requiem and the luncheon afterwards, please do join us!

This will be the first Annual Requiem since the death of Father Walker, our Warden from 1997-2012. We printed a stop-press obituary in the January *Intercession Paper*, and it is re-printed in this paper also. At the time of last year's Requiem, Father Walker was quite ill, but we hoped had some significant time left in this life. Alas, it was not to be, and he died just a week later in Denver. My mind went back to the Requiem at Resurrection in 2011, when Father Walker, showing the obvious effects of chemotherapy, read the

necrology at the Mass. Everyone present had the same thought: hoping and praying that the following year his own name would not be on the list. That prayer was answered, but this year, such will take place, and Father Walker's name will be on the list he read out fifteen years in a row. It will therefore be a particularly poignant moment when Father Lutz, who has succeeded Father Walker as Warden, reads his name, and also when Father Godderz, who has succeeded Father Walker as Master of SSC is our preacher. Whether you are able to be with us in New York or must be at home, may I ask you to pause at eleven o'clock that morning and pray for the soul of Ralph Thomas Walker, Priest, and Warden of the Guild, Master of the SSC, and Rector of St Michael & All Angels' Church, Denver? He has prayed so faithfully for our departed loved ones; it is time for us to do the same for him.

I must just close by thanking those of you who have sent good wishes and cards on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of my ordination to the priesthood. The celebration of this event will have taken place on the Feast of SS Peter & Paul, 29 June, probably before you receive this, but I am so pleased that several of you have indicated you will join us for the Mass. I remember very well Father Robert Wetherell, a member of our Council for many years, telling me at his Golden Jubilee in 1989 that as happy an occasion as it was, it was also rather difficult. When I asked why, he told me that it was rather sobering to think of fifty (or in my case, twenty-five) years of priesthood, and inevitably remembering the mistakes, shortcomings and omissions that will rise up for all of us. All of the men Christ calls to share his priesthood though, will understand this and share my prayer on the day, to God be the glory for all he has done through me, and may the Holy Ghost forgive me the rest. In addition to the three parishes I have served: Resurrection, S. Clement's Philadelphia, and the Church of St Mary the Virgin in Times Square, I wish to thank those with whom I have shared the concerns of ministry elsewhere because it was important to me: The Society of the Holy Cross as its Spiritual Director since 1999, the Chapter of St John Fisher in SSC whose vicar I have been since 2000, the Church in Ghana, the Shrine at Walsingham, and not least the Guild of All Souls which I have served as Warden 1989-1997, and Superior-General since 1997. Naturally, I continue to pray for the dead who were involved in these ministries and concerns with me, just as much as the living. Remembering the priests and laymen who have helped and supported me in all these concerns or worked with me in them, it makes ever more obvious the truth that the Catholic Church is one family whether on Earth, in Purgatory or in Heaven. The Church Militant here on Earth strives and fights for Christ and for our own salvation, the Church Expectant in Purgatory waits for the fullest vision of God and are prepared for that, and the Church Triumphant in Heaven worships with Our Lady and all the Saints at the Marriage Feast of the Lamb. There is neither time nor space with God, however, and so we are all one, joined with the bonds of the Catholic Faith, the Hope of Salvation and the Love of God and each other.

Affectionately, yours in the Holy Souls,

Father Barry E. B. Swain, SSC