

(GAS Letter for July Intercession Paper)

My dear Fellow Members of the Guild:

I normally begin this letter to you in July to give first notice of our Annual Requiem Mass for the year. We shall be gathering this November in my church, the Guild's National Shrine, the Church of the Resurrection, in New York, on Saturday, 14 November 2015 at 11.00 a.m. We have two alluring treats for you. The first is that The Rt Rev'd Norman Banks, The Lord Bishop of Richborough, and President of the English Guild will be with us to preach and pontificate. I first met Bishop Banks when he was Vicar of the parish church at Walsingham, when I preached at the Shrine on the Assumption in 2007. I only heard the best reports of him at Walsingham, and such has continued to be the case since he has been Bishop of Richborough, a see suffragan to the Archbishop of Canterbury, to which he was appointed by HM The Queen in 2011. As President of the English Guild, Dr Banks also has a heavy responsibility as the English Guild has a great many advowsons of livings in its possession, which means that it has the right to appoint priests to these churches. This influence has been reduced in recent years by the pernicious habit of the Church of England in suspending the livings, which "temporarily" removes the right of the Patrons (which is the technical name for the person or entity which has the right to make these appointments). In practice, such "suspensions" are often permanent, and sometimes intended as such. Members of the Episcopal Church might think this practice of patronage elitist, but I have not noticed over the years that our system, which vests enormous power in search committees of laymen appointed by Vestries and often pressured by diocesan bishops, has had a great deal more success in finding the right priest for a parish than has the Church of England's system of patronage. Still, both are part of what we once used to enjoy calling the rich tapestry of Anglican life.

The second treat which we shall use to lure you to New York is that my superlative professional choir, under the direction of Mr David Enlow, a member of the Guild and of my church, who is its Organist and Choir Master, as well as being an internationally known recitalist, will be offering Mozart's Requiem. This piece, well known to us all, is rarely offered in its proper setting as the music of a Requiem Mass, so it will be an unusual and, I suspect, moving occasion. Naturally the Guild's dead who have died since our Requiem at the Church of the Advent in Boston in November 2014, will be prayed for by name, as well as any whom you have enrolled posthumously. A luncheon will follow in our Guild Hall, and you may consider this not only an invitation but an exhortation to be with us.

I hope you will continue to pray for our dear brother and long-time Council member Father Richard Cornish Martin, SSC, who remains very gravely ill. Father Martin was for some years Rector of St George's Church, Washington, and then St Paul's K Street in Washington. He is known to many of you as the Superior of the American Society of

Mary, as he was the first such person and remained so for over forty years, until just recently. Father Martin is a native of Philadelphia, and as such I encountered his richly deserved reputation as the finest of priests and the kindest of men. Though it is unlikely he will be able to be with us in New York, he will be very close to our thoughts and hearts.

I am most grateful to the members of our Council for their work and support as well as to our devoted Secretary-Treasurer, Father John Lancaster SSC, who is the hardest working of us all! Once upon a time, the entire machinery of the Guild depended on Branch Secretaries, as almost all the members of the Guild belonged to local branches which were vested in various parishes. It requires ten members to erect a branch or restore it, and both have indeed happened over the last few years. Alas, what has also happened is that various branches which were once thriving have now become dormant, and have been closed (we hope awaiting resurrection). More members these days belong as “at large” members which does not mean that they have committed a crime and are “on the lam”, but that they belong individually and independently of any branch. Such is true of course of all our members who are not, or no longer, Anglicans, but also of many who attend a church which has no strong connection to the Guild and few, if any, other members amongst its communicants. While we are grateful for these members, we do realise that it is harder to stay “in touch” with them than with those in branches where there is a “cheerleader” for the Guild in the person of the Branch Secretary. Fortunately, this development has coincided with the increased quality and reduced price of printing, and with the advent of the internet. If you have not yet seen our website, you might have a look: www.guildofallsouls.net which has quite a few interesting items on it: photographs of previous masses, historic sermons given at Guild events, and pieces about the Guild’s history and its present purposes. We also have our Intercession Paper to stay in touch, though it is true that what was monthly as recently as the 1940s, then quarterly, is now a twice a year publication. Still, we think that in its new livery and its expanded content, it can remain a vital link with the Guild’s membership who are still on this side of the Gate of Death!

I would just like to end by reminding you that as members of the Guild you have various obligations, which include praying and paying – praying for the dead and paying dues! We also hope you will be able, from time to time, to send along a little extra for the work of the Guild, which we always appreciate. But in addition to your obligations, you also have several privileges. One is of course that we shall be praying for you by name in perpetuity after your death. Your enjoyment of that privilege, we trust, is some time away! There are other privileges though. You may contact me by telephone, post, email, facsimile, telegram, smoke signal or carrier pidgeon to ask prayers at the National Shrine for any of the deceased just once, or enroll such a person in our chantry list permanently for an alms of \$20.00. You may also request prayers for the sick and the dying, and it will be our privilege and duty to see to it that they are offered at the National Shrine. We always light a candle for each of these requests at the Shrine

which, as you know, is a statue of Our Lord carved for us in Spain, which shows the love of His Sacred Heart for all souls, living and departed. Many of you simply contact me and ask for a candle to be lighted for a private intention, and that, too, is perfectly fine. We want to encourage you to use the Guild's structure for these prayers and intentions, as it is by them, as well as by the recitation of the required Chantry prayers, that we strengthen our link of prayer and charity, which binds us not only to each other in this country, but to the Guild in the Mother Country, and to those who have gone before us and indeed those who will come after us. The Church is a long and broad river, which began to flow on the first Whitsunday and will continue to do so until the coming of Our Lord to judge the quick and the dead and the world by fire. In a sense, the Guild is the same, flowing from its beginnings by a group of dedicated laymen in the Church of England in 1873, continuing through the American Branch's establishment in 1889, through the present day and on into the future. Wherever someone has entered the Church (or the Guild) one is automatically part of that coursing river of grace which means that we are all together, no matter what time or place we live in.

Yours in the Holy Souls,

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

Superior-General