

Dear Fellow Members of the Guild:

I write this as our Annual Requiem has just finished. It was a magnificent occasion, with about 250 people present, with nearly 100 staying for luncheon. The traditional Requiem Mass was offered at the Church of the Resurrection in New York, with rites according to the English Missal, in black vestments. Absolution at the Catafalque followed with prayers for the Guild's departed members, especially those who have died during the past year. Your Superior-General was the Celebrant of the Mass, Father Trent Fraser the deacon and Father Charles McClean the subdeacon. Apart from two who could not be with us, every member of the Guild's Council was present and seated in choir, which must be nearly a first! The Council met before the Mass at eleven o'clock. Mozart's Requiem was offered at the Mass by the Resurrection's Choir, augmented by a few soloists, including Resurrection's Choir Master David Gwesyn Smith. Organist David Enlow played, and all was under the baton of Ben Pope, a conductor of the Royal Ballet at Covent Garden, who was visiting us for the week-end. The Guild's lovely set of black velvet French vestments with its matching pall was again used, as in the past several years. Father Andrew Sloane, Rector of St Paul's, K Street, Washington, a member of our Council, preached a marvellous sermon about love and recognition in this life and the next. Many Guild members were present at the luncheon following, a catered affair, at which all could catch up with each other. Guild members were present from Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston and many points in between. The two members who came the longest distances were certainly Warden Father Ralph Walker of Denver, Colorado, and Father Darwin Kirby all the way from North Carolina. Father Kirby also gave an impromptu and very kind word at lunch.

Many remarked on the keen and happy spirit of the proceedings and indeed it was a special day for the Guild. We are very happy to thank all those who had any part in the proceedings, especially the Council members who came from various locales to take part, especially our preacher and Sacred Ministers, and our faithful Secretary-General, Father John Lancaster. It was a lovely day! **Mark your calendars now for next year's Annual Requiem, Saturday, 8th November 2003, at the Church of the Ascension & St Agnes, Washington, D. C., at Noon.**

Our thanks go to Father McClean for assisting in reprinting the wonderful print, *The Place of Meeting*, which was offered for sale at the luncheon. Copies of this T. Noyes Lewis print, long a feature of sacristies and church halls, can be obtained from the Secretary-General. The post card size copies are \$1.00 per copy including postage, the poster size copies are \$5.00 including postage. We recommend them to clergy and laity alike.

A few of you belong to local branches of the Guild, some of which even occasionally meet! But for most of you, the Guild exists in the reality of prayer, which is not a bad thing. Our annual meeting is an occasion for prayer, worship, and fellowship, and it is lovely that so many of you take the time to come, some from long distances. For all of us, however, the great reality of the Guild is that it constitutes a microcosm of the Communion of Saints.

The largest group of our members have gone before us, and they are the ones we pray for day by day, week by week. Two who have recently joined this group of the Church Expectant were remembered particularly at the Annual Requiem. One was Father Peter Laister, a member of the American Guild from 1986-1992, and a member of its Council for all of that time. Father Laister had been previously the President of the English Guild (the office analogous to our office of Superior-General), and had served on its patronage committee before that. In retirement, he had returned to London in 1993, and had been of help in numerous London parishes, and remained on the English Guild's Council as its Nestor. He was the second Rector to whom I was curate, and his passing to the next stage of life was a sad one for me as for all who knew him.

Our great loss in the American Guild in the last year has been Miss Virginia Sites, who was our Secretary-General from 1968 to 2000. Miss Sites was the mainstay of the Guild during this entire period, serving as Father Kunkel's "right hand man" during the whole of his tenure, and Father Vang during his tenure, and beginning me off! Miss Sites was absolutely devoted to the Guild, and belonged to an earlier era in Anglo-Catholicism of maiden ladies with time on their hands which they devoted zealously and wholeheartedly to the Church and its institutions. Miss Sites was an indefatigable worker, and always had the Guild's interests close to heart. Having cleared out the Guild's effects from her home in South Orange, N. J. last year, I can attest to her voluminous and friendly correspondence with the Guild's members over those thirty-two years. She was a living connexion to the earlier world in the Guild of Father Joiner and Miss Vaughan, which takes us back to the 1930s. If all of this is a mystery to you, I recommend ordering a copy of the Guild's history, still available from the Secretary-General.

The second group of the Guild is that group of its members who have gone before, have gone through their time of purifying, and are now at the throne of God. We cannot know their names or their number, but trusting in God, we know that some must be with him already in Heaven. For them, our prayers are redundant, as they have reached the fulfilment of all desire: God. When we pray for them, therefore, in our lists, the effect is that they are reminded of us, and we have, in effect, asked their prayers! As Saints of God, they now have no need of our feeble prayers, but instead can offer us the same spiritual work of mercy that we once offered for them.

The third group is of course the Guild's living active membership. This is, of course, the smallest group! To all of you comes my reminder to say your prayers regularly for the Guild and for our dead, to make your witness for the Truth of the Resurrection of the Dead and the life of the world to come, and to prepare yourselves for your own deaths, as all Christians must. The Four Last Things, which we have just considered in Advent, Death, Judgement, Heaven and Hell, are the great realities of life and are worthy of our consideration always. We must undergo three of the four: Death and Judgement are set by God, the choice of the latter two is up to us!

Yours in the Holy Souls,

Father Barry Swain,
Superior-General