

GAS Letter for July 2017 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. Every other year or so, this is otiose and obnoxious, as it is I myself who I would be thanking! Nonetheless, our Annual Requiem at the Guild's National Shrine, The Church of the Resurrection, Park Avenue and East 74th Street, in New York, on Saturday, 11 November 2017 was by all accounts a splendid occasion. I can certainly without fear of reproach thank our fully professional choir and a chamber orchestra under the direction of David Enlow, who is also a Guild Council member, our Organist and Choir Master, and the Dean of the New York Chapter of the American Guild of Organists, for their offering of Michael Haydn's Requiem. I always find that this piece is far more rewarding than I expect it to be – we know that it was in Mozart's mind when he wrote his far more famous piece, and suggestions of that later and far better known piece abound in the Haydn. Michael Haydn himself is an undervalued composer outside of Austria and Hungary. We had a wonderful sermon from our Father Pham (re-printed later in this number of the *Intercession Paper*), sometime assistant at my church, whose sermons were always thought provoking and much laden with wit and insight. We were able to repair afterwards to the Guild Hall for a luncheon, and thence many wended their way home, most to other places in the city, some leaving it. (I am reminded of Governor Al Smith's oft-quoted phrase, "The saddest four words in the English language are: "He left the city.") In any case, we were very happy to welcome our visitors from far and wide, and I think yet again the winner of the *Palme d'Or* for the farthest journey was Father Trent Fraser SSC, who came from Denver, Colorado. Father Fraser also read the Necrology this year because, although it is the Warden's prerogative, a bout of ill health kept Father Lutz at home in Ohio this year, and Father Fraser is the senior serving member of the Council not an officer. We send our best wishes and prayers to Father Lutz for full recovery, and the same to Canon King's wife, who remains quite ill.

It would have been impossible at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month not to have begun with the customary silence and Remembrance of our War Dead. This was the 99th Anniversary of the Armistice and, as we have been observing anniversary after anniversary these last years, the cycle will end next November. There was the centenary first of the beginning of the Great War, and then famous battles like Ypres, the Somme, Passchendaele, the Marne, Jutland, Gallipoli and Verdun. It will be rather a relief to commemorate the Centenary of the Armistice next November 11th. The shock and the horror of the Great War have been endlessly documented and commented upon by everyone from historians like Barbara Tuchman (once regarded as magisterial, now far less so), to collections of letters and obituaries which have been published in the United Kingdom which were deeply touching, biographies of famous figures like Earl Haig, Lord Jellicoe, King George V, "Lawrence of Arabia", and among our enemies Hindenburg and Ludendorff, to the famous English language poets like Rupert Brooke and Wilfred Owen. One of the most common observations was "the loss of faith" and the failure of Christianity and, even, God, in the situation. This was a sad phenomenon and in a sense was a sign of the failure of churches to meet the needs of grieving and devastated people. The Church of England was in a special sense at a loss as its central portion had nothing to offer but "state Shinto" services and rather a lot of platitudes. It was often said that British Army chaplains had little to offer their men but cigarettes, indeed the most famous British chaplain was called "Woodbine Willie" after a brand of cigarette he was much given to handing out "as a ministry". Roman Catholic chaplains could at least say Mass on battlefields and on battleships, and did. The Roman Catholic church could also offer Requiems Masses and pray for the dead, whereas the "regular" Church of England could not. The Guild of Souls could, however, and did, and it experienced a great period of growth between 1918 and 1939. Some in the 1920s turned to spiritualism to speak to their dear dead (a phenomenon also noted in America after the Civil War), but for those who understood prayer for the dead, quite a different avenue opened before

them, not one of fraudulent mediums and table-tipping, but real, efficacious prayer, which God has promised us helps our dead. As for the feeling that became rather common, alas, that people did not understand “why God had allowed the War”, George Bernard Shaw, an atheist and no friend to organised Christianity, said, “God? I was under the impression that the Kaiser made war on us, not God.”

At its Annual Meeting the night before the Mass, the Guild’s Council re-elected Father Trent Fraser, SSC (Rector of St Michael & All Angels, Denver), Mr Paul McKee a lay member of St Paul’s K Street in Washington, Father John Alexander SSC (Rector of St Stephen’s, Providence, RI) & Father Rob Kerr SSC (Rector of the Church of the Redeemer, Southfield, Michigan), 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 five years since Father Walker’s death, Father Fraser has been a member since 1997, and I have been a member of the Council since 1988, and Superior-General since 1997. That means that this concludes my twentieth year as Superior-General, an honour which I have cherished and hope that I have discharged to the best of my ability, God being my helper!

Yours in the Holy Souls,

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

ANNUAL REQUIEM MASS OF THE GUILD OF ALL SOULS
SATURDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2018 AT 11.00 A.M.

ST PAUL’S CHURCH,
199 CARROLL STREET (AT CLINTON STREET)
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK
(at the kind invitation of Father Sean Wallace, Interim Priest-in-Charge)

SERMON: THE REV'D THE FATHER SUPERIOR-GENERAL

MUSIC WILL BE OFFERED BY THE CHOIR OF THE
CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION, NEW YORK,

THE GUILD'S NATIONAL SHRINE

LUNCHEON WILL FOLLOW, NO RESERVATIONS REQUIRED

(The Guild last met at St Paul's in 1992, at the invitation of Father Peter Cullen, and Father Gaylord Hitchcock was the preacher on that occasion. St Paul's was a centre of Guild activity for many years, and had one of its largest branches. Father Andrew Chalmers Wilson, his successor Father Granville Mercer Williams SSJE, and his successor Father Gregory Mabry, were all members of the Council, and a prominent lay member, T. E. Smith, was a long-time Secretary-General and Treasurer-General.)