

jhs



ABBAY OF GETHSEMANI
TRAPPIST, KENTUCKY

Aug. 28, 1965

By all their ornatus

Dear Victor:

Thanks for your very good letter about the Symbolism notes. I knew you would like them. I agree with your remarks on ornatus. In the Vulgate text of Genesis on creation, God is ~~speaking~~ spoken of as finishing the heavens and earth and all their ornatus. I think that a lot of the austerity so called of the moderns is just a pose in part at least. But of course there is a justifiable, though perhaps not always reasonable, reaction against false ornamentation. Well, in this as in everything else, we are in turmoil today, and no one really knows the full explanation, ~~except~~ except that we can say it is a manifestation of sin: the primal sin of hubris and of making ourselves the beginning and the end of everything, collectively, as a race, and as individuals.

Well, one reason why I have not written is that it took time to get all my affairs in the novitiate settled and move completely to the hermitage. I have been here in practically complete solitude for a week now, going down to the monastery once a day only to say Mass and get one cooked meal. I hardly see anybody, even in the community. I can see that this kind of life is not altogether easy, but it is what has been appointed for me by God and it is what I will try to do to the best of my ability. I do not claim to understand all the ins and outs of it, but I can see that it is a real and uncompromising task, and therefore must be done, whereas for me what was going on ~~in~~ in the monastery was not, apparently, that much to the point, though I cannot criticize anyone or anything.

I don't know whether this means the end of your visits over here, I have not gone into all the details of that. I hope the door is still open and I think it is, but I do not think we should plan anything right away. I am sure there will be more opportunities. We'll see.

The writing, of course, continues.

One thing I miss, having had to change from the novitiate chapel to another place for my Mass, I no longer say Mass before your ~~crucifix~~ crucifix. I miss it very much, it had come to be a very important element in my worship. Now I am in another quite different sort of place, modern, in both good and bad senses, with one of those twisted metal Christs they do these days (some brother made it) and I am afraid the effect is not at all the same. I may have some taste for some modern art but so far none of the so called modern "sacred" art has had the slightest appeal to me. I think it is grotesque and pretentious, for the most part, and a pose. I have no particular choice in this, as this is the best place for my Mass according to the time at which I say it.

I think often of you and Carolyn and wish I could see you, but we must wait. My health is pretty good, and being in the hermitage certainly seems to have improved it, at any rate. I will refrain from eating too much of my own cooking, and thus be safe. Being pulled this way and that in community was not much of a help and it is good to get to a completely unified and primitive life. It is strange to think that one is one of the few people in our society actually living such a life today. Rather an awesome responsibility. Or not. I don't know. God bless you. Keep well and rested. And work, and write when you can. All the best always, in the Lord,

Tom