

Aug 22, 1967

Most Reverend and Dear Father:

Since the letter I wrote yesterday was too late for yesterday's mail I am adding this one which may perhaps be more succinct and more useful. I thought of destroying yesterday's letter or entirely rewriting it, but I send it as it is, in the hope that there may still be some point in it.

First of all I want to say how touched and grateful ~~am~~ I am that the Holy Father should remember me, and I will write to him myself to express my gratitude and devotion.

About the message he asks of us: I should say first of all that it is not our place to write anything apologetic. Thus I am sure we all agree that it is not for us to spell out proofs for the existence ~~of~~ of God but merely to bear witness in our simplicity to His universal love for all men and His message of salvation, but above all to His presence in the hearts of all men, including sinners, including those who hate Him. Without going into technical distinctions of natural supernatural, and so on, though emphasizing grace later on.

The important thing in our message should it seems to me be prayer and contemplation. But we must be careful not to present prayer as a mere formal duty or to emphasize prayer of petition. We should bear in mind that Marx taught an interesting doctrine about religious alienation, which is a consequence of regarding God as distant and purely transcendent and putting all our hope for every good in the future life, not realizing God's presence to us in this life and not realizing that prayer means contact with the deepest reality of life, our own truth in Him. Also we should perhaps point out that prayer is the truest guarantee of personal freedom. That we are most truly free in the free encounter of our hearts with God in His word and in receiving His Spirit which is the Spirit of sonship, truth and freedom. The Truth that makes us free is not merely a matter of information about God but the presence in us of a divine person by love and grace, bringing us into the intimate personal life of God as His Sons by adoption.. This is the basis of all prayer and all prayer should be oriented to this mystery of sonship in which the Spirit in us recognizes the Father. The cry of the Spirit in us, the cry of recognition that we are Sons in the Son, is the heart of our prayer and the great motive of prayer. Hence recollection is not the exclusion of material things but attentiveness to the Spirit in our inmost heart. The contemplative life should not be regarded as the exclusive prerogative of those who dwell in monastic walls. All men can seek and find this intimate awareness and awakening which is a gift of love and a vivifying touch of creative and redemptive power, that power which raised Christ from the dead and cleanses us from dead works to serve the living God. Which should remind us also that the monastery must not be a place of mere "dead works" and that faith is the most important thing in our lives, not the empty formalities and rites which are mere routines is not vivified by the living presence of God and by His love which is beyond all legalism. It should certainly be emphasized today that prayer is a real source of personal freedom in the midst of a world in which men are dominated by massive organizations and rigid institutions which seek only to exploit them for money and power. Far from being the cause of alienation, true religion in spirit is a liberating force that helps man to find himself in God.

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I regret that time does not permit me to write more on this. I feel it is useless to try to convey these ideas on paper when it would be much more worth while to be able to discuss them with you in living words and work out with you and the other fathers just what ought to be said. I will in any case pray that you may arrive at something corresponding to what the Holy Father really wants.

With cordial regards in Christ Our Lord,