

Stanbrook Abbey,
Callow End,
Worcester.

St Louis, 1964

Dear Father Louis,

This was meant to arrive in time for your feast, but even if it took off instantly, by jet plane from door to door, it would scarcely arrive before midnight. I saw the Guigo in the box of sample printing and managed to get hold of an unbound copy. I knew I had a bit of that quiet green leather left over and some vellum I couldn't write on because of the yellow marks you will notice on it (which, I trust, merely make it look like a contemporary binding- circa 1135) and I thought I should try my hand at doing you something special in the way of binding.* I hope you like it - if not, you can always make bella figura by giving it to Father Abbot. I saw they had also printed scores of copies of that sentence of yours, so now you have enough of them, though, some day, I might still do one in Roman, so that you can see what it looks like Not in italic. If you remember, Father Abbot fancied it the last time I did it, so you never saw it.

to/ I meant to write when I bound up those Baker things and sent them off to you. The one in brown and cream hand-made paper is for Gethsemani/keep - yes, I know, it is thoroughly unpractical, and I am sorry, but I couldn't resist it. The other in brown and pig, they say they want back here for the library, if you wouldn't mind returning it when you have done with it.

By a piece of luck we had the Mass of St Louis today at a side-altar - a German visiting priest said it - otherwise,

*Some by II Class
an mail
with amir's
Letic*



it is not said in this country. Some French friends of mine have a proprietary interest in him - he is in their family tree.

Of course you will get at least one copy of the Raissa poems when they print them. I think they have really started at last. A friend of mine, the writer Antonia White, who is an expert translator, is doing the Journal and she is having a terrible time with Jacq. M. who won't let her say "recollection" for "recueillement" or anything he doesn't fancy the sound of. It is going to make the whole thing sound very exotic and ponderous, which is what he says he wants to avoid, but she will have to do what he wants, although the word recueillement occurs on every other page. Every now and then I feel quite light-headed with relief at the thought that I am not translating it - I knew what would happen, from the poems.

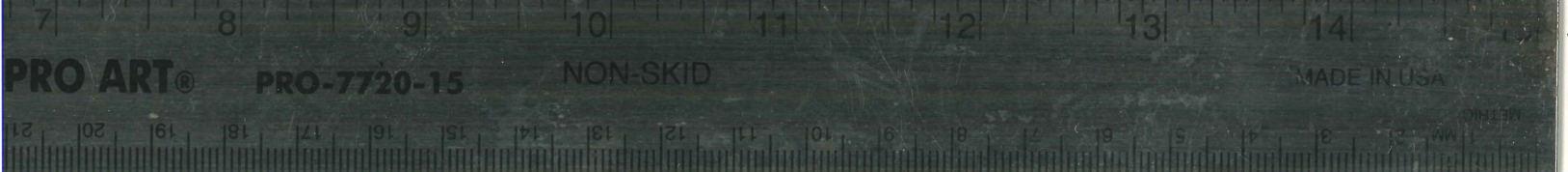
How is your fiftieth year progressing? I must tell you of another strange coincidence - my brother's birthday is on the 19th March, and his name is Paul.

A propos of what you said in your last letter about the number of defections after solemn profession, I wonder whether it is really better for people to stay if they really want to go. Don't you think they have a very bad effect on others in their monastery? I cannot help thinking that once the idea of leaving is entertained, instead of being put aside at once as the temptation it is, the infidelity has begun, and the subject is on the way out, at least in his own mind. The temptation must be greater for monks than for nuns - they only have to change over and become secular priests, and they are at once deferred to because of their calling - they exchange what may well be complete nonentity with no prospect of advancement (there are very few key jobs in a monastery and plenty of talented people have to do without them) for the importance of "apostolic" work. Instead of being told what to do, they do the telling! And everything is all right because they can

tell themselves that, at last, they are performing their priestly functions, taking care of souls instead of having their souls taken care of by the abbot. Yes, it is only too easy to see how it works. I am glad you don't rundown Monica Baldwin - I thought her book honest and remarkably restrained. It was her description of sitting down on a suitcase in the middle of nowhere while she waited for a train connection and recited to herself, as the sun rose, Jam lucis orto sidere, that made me find out what the office was all about, and say it. In fact, she is one of the reasons I am here. A non-Catholic friend of mine told me, after she had read the book, that she understood, at last, why women became nuns, and when I came here, she did really understand, and still comes to see me three times a year, after eleven years.

I was most interested in what you said, but I don't remember where, about your experiment with non-ordained choir monks. I am sure it will be successful; there are men who would like to be monks but are held back because they feel they have no vocation to the priesthood. The top and bottom of it all - the monastic life - seems to me to be contained in the first sentence of the last paragraph of your review: The Monk in the diaspora.

I have gone on far too long, and aired my views far too much, which is why I don't write oftener - I know perfectly well that it would only be another form of self-indulgence, in the usual disguise. Life is full of traps for someone like me.



I have got The Silent Life, and now I want to be a Camaldolese monk, not a Carthusian any more! There is a new edition of Surin's Guide Spirituel, which I am also enjoying. You said I was to remind you, in the autumn, of something you have written on the negro problem, which is to appear in France. Things sound as though they were better with you, on the whole, but perhaps that remark springs from my ignorance of real facts.

Do pray that Jacques M. will let Antonia translate the Journal properly! It is so important that it should not be in pidgin English.

I hope your trouble is better and that typing is no longer a burden. Don't feel you have to be in a hurry to answer this, because of the little book - I know how busy you are, and simply cannot imagine how you manage the novices and all the rest.

Benedic,

Yours in Domino

S. Navella

P.S. I am delighted to know from you how well you like the Novicia - so do I - I had right through the whole thing, after my profession, & typed out every single bit I fancied. Nobody touches it, but it is fascinating, if they only knew!