

jhs



ABBEY OF GETHSEMANI
TRAPPIST, KENTUCKY

Sept 20, 1966

Dear Victor:

I have tried my hand at translating the Goethe quotation: it is enclosed. I don't know if the result is very helpful, but it is about the best. I can do I suppose that you can adjust it to suit your needs if there is anything good in it.

Looking at the calendar I see October 22 will be quite a good day for me, as things are now shaping up. We might keep that in mind as the best date in that month, anyway. Otherwise perhaps the first Saturday in November.

Victor, I think that in all simplicity I owe you a few words of help and encouragement at this time when, as you said the other day, "the last hour" cannot be very far away now. Since that is the most important part of a man's life in some ways, it is the duty of a friend and a priest to say something. Of course I know that there is a normal way of reconciliation with the Church -- an official way. I am not going to talk about this as our relationship is not an official one in any case. But the fact of "reconciliation", however you look at it, is worth considering. When you are in fact a deeply Christian person and thinker (all your thought about art presupposes centuries of Christian thought on the subject it seems to me) it would be a pity for you to end your life in a kind of open rift with the Church, even though the Church has plenty of failings and limitations. It is as much a matter of you forgiving the Church as the Church forgiving you. However you look at it-- and you may not for reasons of your own see fit to receive the Sacrament of the Sick and the other Sacraments,--I would say that there would be a definite point in affirming as well and as clearly as you can, in whatever way you can, your adherence to truths you have in fact lived by ("personal God" does not mean anthropomorphic God: but an ultimate Freedom which is infinitely creative and a source of all love and truth). In such a way as to say that you and the Church are not at odds on these truths and that it is your desire to leave this life as you have lived in it: with the total submission of your mind and heart and hands and all that you are, to the creative and loving source of all that you have ever loved, or admired, or striven for. I have no doubt that in fact you do this in your heart: if you can also do it in some more open expression-- I leave you to think of this in your own way. I certainly think you have no obligation to do anything that would imply a repudiation of anything that has been of real value and meaning in your life. All that is good in our lives is from God. In any event, I will continue to pray for you as always and if you can in some way pray for yourself that is all to the good. With all my heart I ask God to bless you. Your friendship has been a great blessing, greater than I can say.

I did not mean to make this so long a letter, and I hope you do not think I have been officious about it. I just thought I ought to say what seemed to me important, and doubtless you have thought much of these things yourself.

All blessings to you and Carolyn.

Yours in Christ, always,

Tom

P.S. Turning to another question, that of Menendez: I think he and his work do not need to be discussed further in letters. I will clarify this next time we talk about the question.