

Milwaukee, Wisconsin May 2, 1967

Dear Tom: I have put off writing so that I would have time for a reply to your long and predictably thoughtful letter in regard to myself and the marriage situation and CRF. Unfortunately, I don't have the letter with me at the moment, but that's no doubt just as well. I can recall the general direction, questions raised etc, and perhaps will comment on them here. Perhaps not. We'll try to let the Spirit blow where he wills.

slum

At the moment I'm in the midst of a ~~skm~~/section of Milwaukee, staying with a small community of laymen--two gals, four guys. Some time ago Bill Taylor, whom I had met at Mary's Day in Los Angeles last year, set up some speaking dates for me here. I flew in four days ago, fresh from San Francisco, Berkeley, Nevada City, El Paso and Minnesota, with about a week in various parts of New York state salted in there somewhere. Bill is a lanky, gentle, a bit shy kind of person, now doing graduate work at Marquette in biochemistry; has artistic ability, wants somehow to be a peacemaker. Would like--so many students would--to take a year off from studies in order to see other communities, etc., experiment with his vocation a bit, but unable to do so without getting drafted. Appalling. We live in a prison society. He's considering non-cooperation, at the present is an alternative service CO. Good person.

Rev. Thomas Merton
Abbot of Gethsemani
Trappist, Kentucky

In part he prompts this letter, as he shared with me this morning a hand written mass, enclosed, the text of which was written by Father Mark Kent, a Maryknoller; as you may know he is the brother of Sister Co rita. The art work was done by an IHC student, a friend of Bill's and a member of Father Kent's little flock. Recalling that you had something to do with the commission trying to do something with the mass, I ~~wax~~ asked Bill if he would mind lending this to you. Of course I'm not suggesting hat this should be a new mass text. It is my hope we are getting away from liturgies which become ~~faceless~~ faceless in the course of continuing repetition. But there is so much wonder in this particular lit rgy: "We give you thanks O Father Because you gibe us the privilege of being awed....Holy Breathgiver Mercy us... We are astonished at the repair job you did onmankind..." etc. So we send it to you for your fun (though not the variety on the Coleman lantern box), though you'll have to later on send it back to Bill ~~Johnson~~ (920a N. 16th St., Milwaukee, Wis. 53233).
Taylor

"Thank you God for these most amazing days." I wish it were possible to share you the many riches of these weeks of new friendship, discovery, renewal of many kinds. A new creation seems to be stirring. Everywhere I find people learning to live together in community, not as it once was, someone circulating a Serious memo or plan for Community but rather it simply occurring--people starting to live together, cook together, sometimes pray together. In one of the communities they use the term water brothers and water sisters, meaning someone who has become part of me, and me of him, two persons between whom the walls have fallen. I like the term because it succeeds in suggesting a new kind, a new quality of relationship. Something finally mysterious, a mysterium fidei, as is said. The communities of course differ drastically from house to house, as they should. There are certain points of similarity, however, perhaps a kind of explorative spirit, liberation from certain illusions (that happiness and possessions/security are bound together; rather the realization that these are self-exclusory; for example).

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These are not what a chancery office would consider religious houses. I suspect to some they might be considered something of a scandal. Yet I am deeply impressed by the religious character of these gatherings, the sharing out of love, the mutual assistance, the working together toward vocations of service and poverty. Several of the persons in this community are hoping to spend their lives with the Spanish-speaking, either here or in Latin America. Two work in a nearby house of hospitality serving Spanish speaking persons and now Indians as well (how beautiful are the Indian children; I am utterly astonished). One is a teacher. One runs something called The Roger LaPorte Center, which offers free coffee, a place to rest; the same fellow works as a laborer on the docks and a wholesale produce center several days a week in order to take care of expenses of the Roger LaPorte Center and his economic weight in the community.

Tonight, my last here, we have a meal of reconciliation, organized by this community, at a Melkite Rite Catholic Church nearby. I was ~~xxxxx~~ surprised to find he went listed and recommended in some detail in the parish bulletin of a nearby Negro ghetto church. It will apparently be an unusual meal of reconciliation because they hope to combine penitance with joy. That is, we should be joyful that we are standing with our brothers under siege. And so the meal will end with a circle dance and a Jewish marriage song.



I must leave for a meeting nearby. They are working on a continuing beg-in effort for war victims but have been getting a lot of static from pastors of the Catholic churches. Threatened with arrest, etc. Yet one Catholic Church reportedly has spent more than \$10,000 gold plating its three domed steeples. You can see them from almost any point in the city. What is worse, the whole thing even looks hideous. In any event, I must get to the meeting.

Much love,

Jim
Jim