

7 October 1971

Dear Lennie:

It has taken this long to catch up on much work here, but the ~~paper~~ experience of the preparation and performance of so powerful a work as Mass still pervades my consciousness daily, and is no little distraction when it does.

By now many thousands of reactions have been registered, and all with passion. The adverse criticism has been most revealing of general spiritual miasma, the despair of souls who no longer dare hope, the insufficiency of vision dimmed to total blindness . . . "the people perish". Without exception those critics who have resorted to the most self-revealing extremity of deprecation, powerfully exemplify the dynamic of Mass -- in the Agnus Dei . . . they are broken, fragmented on the "cross of agony" which is the world today, and has always been this world. But God so loved this world that he gave his Son to come among us and be a sign of his love for us. We can deny that love daily . . . we can most bitterly break every sign of it around us and in the lives of all brothers who surround us . . . but we cannot kill it, nor rid ourselves of our guilt-knowledge, without the expiation of His Peace arising anew from the debris and surprising us with its great wonder.

That has always been hard for proud man to accept . . . that salvation belongeth to the Lord. From the end of Father Happle's sermon to the whalers in Moby Dick is a text I set to music as the final movement of my oratorio Jonah -- it is: For what is man that he should live out the lifetime of God.

A renewal of faith will occur in thousands who will respond to the message of Mass, because of its contemporaneity, its nobility, its diverse beauty, and powerful contrasts. What renewal makes you an evangelist -- a revivalist, if you will -- and such a blessing is mixed. It is a powerful demand upon you. But then, he gave you much, of which you have proven a superb steward.

The experience for me, through long hours of hard work and hope that the "big AI" would respond to the part it was assigned, proved a "spiritual exercise", as in the teachings of Thomas Aquinas. Musically it was rewarding as well, but as I have tried to express, it was far more, for performers and audience

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alike. Some day I shall conduct it myself and recreate again the fervor of the total involvement.

Thank you, and God's blessing on your work -- yet to come, as it so truly rests on Mass.

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