3816 W. Biddison
Fort Worth, Texas 76109
November 24, 1966

Dear Nell,

This, too, must be written in bits and tatters, but I wanted to answer your magnificently generous letter immediately.

How pleased we are that you liked Gregory's work. Yes, it is something beyond technique - a natural vision - and the beauty of course is that he doesn't realize it and probably won't for many years.

Never, never say you do not do the thing that is most precious of all. I agree with Jacques that the ultimate cure, the ultimate charity, the ultimate wisdom in a world torn by sickness, lies in the creation of beauty - of a beauty that reflects love, the true caritas Christi of St. Paul; and any one of your books has already done more than the more seemingly active things that some of us have done. You are an artist, a very great one - never really doubt that. You don't have to know things, don't have to have techniques even (though heaven knows you do in rich abundance); no - it is something else you have to have, an overflow of the affective nature. That is the great wisdom, because it produces life and beauty and in the simplest, most straight-forward language. That is why we love Bach so tremendously...and some of the chants like the Haec Dies or the Gaude, Virgo Maria.

I regretted, after I sent it, that I had put the Clyde Kennard martyrdom on the other side of the tape...I was afraid it would hurt you too much, affect you too deeply. I have never got over it, as you gathered, and can scarcely bear to look at my portrait of the mother. And we almost died last Christmas when this magnificent mother, who is almost sightless, sent us a hand-made quilt for the boys' bed, saying I had tried to save her son and at least she wanted this quilt used to warm the nights of my sons. She had worked on it almost 6 months, according to her daughter. She is a great, optimistic person. When I became immobile in this chair, she wrote: "I sure am sorry. But after all, it's not so bad. There are still plenty of things you can do." When Vernon Dahmer was firebombed by the KKK last year, he died, leaving a wife and child. Clyde's mother took them in to live with her though she scarcely can nourish herself.

Well, these are the things I should not talk about much.

I am sending you two small prints of Amanda that should convert Satan himself, and that delight me. I use these cards never to send, but to make test prints on. The cap, one knitted for her, but too small...the photos were made the day she tried it on. She thought she was gloriously beautiful in it.

This must be all for the moment. I tried a few hours of darkroom work night before last and it was too much. I hemorrhaged through the bandages all of yesterday. It is okay now but I am weak and worthless today.

Your letter was a magnificent blessing to us. How can we thank you? We send you and Chris our great love,

John