

John Howard Griffin

3816 West Biddison
Fort Worth, Texas 76109

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Dear Nell, I wrote you yesterday, and then your marvelous letter came today and since I am leaving tonight to go "hide-out" at Penn Jones for a few days, I wanted to write you before I leave, because I am completely cut-off out there and cannot mail any letters. Too many people call about important things (most of which I can do nothing about) and far too many simply drop in, and it is not in our nature to simply close the door in their faces, so the only way, in this period of intense need to work, is simply not to be available at all.

Your letter was magnificent. Yes, to practice the Presence, that is the great secret (and one throughout history known only to a few contemplatives): to see, without ever seeking to solve it, the Mystery in all sights, sounds and touches; to immerse oneself so thoroughly in the mystery that the mystery absorbs all and becomes all ~~without~~ until self is merely the receptacle and self disappears, consumed by the mystery. You, like me, though involved in many things, have the private vocation of a hermit; so does Jacques Maritain. My hermit-vocation is in no way destroyed by the presence of the family - on the contrary, they are part of the hermitlife and deepen it for me. I know it was the same for you. Finally, when the perception comes, one ends up erasing almost all other emotions except a kind of awed gratitude.

Pray for me that I can make it through this spring - I mean that I can go ahead and get the work done without falling from fatigue and NOT getting it done; and that I have the wisdom to do it decently.

Yes, I got your magnificent letter about the book. I could not respond, I was so moved, and I said to myself that if only you alone in all the world read it and saw in it what you expressed, then I was overwhelmingly rewarded.

All for the moment. Our great love to you, Nell. Mandy is deeply in love with the two pictures you gave us. The moment she awakens and stretches out her arms to be taken from the bed, she says: "See the baby," and we know that means we should take her into the living room where she kisses the baby through the glass that covers the picture. This is now a daily ritual with her.

Love,

John