

March 2, 1971

Beloved Nell,

What a blessing to talk with you and to have your notes .

~~XXXXXX~~ This in great haste before I get back to work while Mandy and nearly everyone else is down for a nap. I wanted to send this photo of Mandy and Susan, which I like very much, except I loathe Mickey Mouse sweatshirts, though that is the latest camp thing, apparently, and as Penn Jones says - we'd rather be dead than out of style - at least the rest of the family is that way and I honor the idiocy.

The book goes just marvelously - so beautifully it makes me have minor suspicions, but I bury them. Usually when I think something is just great I am embarrassed by it six months or years later.

Susan is dieting and being very self-righteous and fanatic about it (I mean in trying to convert all of us.) She does look gorgeous, though.

Ash Wednesday

Oh, Nell, in my weakness ~~xxxxxxx~~ I did an awful thing. I had to go to the doctors twice, and so went to an old church (very conservative) near the doctor's office to pray during the time between sessions. As I went out, I saw a huge stack of the most noxious right-wing Catholic papers: The Wanderer, Twin Circles, The Thunderbolt (hideously anti-semitic). I started to steal them, but remembered the commandment about stealing. Then I just got possessed either by the Devil or the Holy Spirit, took out my felt-point pen and wrote a nasty, nasty word on the front page of each paper in big Gothic letters. Awful. I couldn't then just leave them there, so I picked up the batch and took them next door to the rectory and told the priest I was shocked to see such trash in the vestibule of his church. He saw the awful word, thanked me profusely for saving him untold embarrassment by bringing the papers to him, and went and (I guess) threw them in the furnace.

I went to confession to Father George. He said he really didn't know what kind of penance to give for a thing like that. "It's so uncharacteristic of you," he remarked. He said he probably should give me as penance to write the word 500 times, but ended up giving me none, since he decided it was an inspiration of the Holy Spirit, because the devil would have inspired me to leave the papers there to subvert the innocent with their poisonous racism.

So you can see what a lamentable spiritual condition I am in, and that my "common streak" is getting wider and wider.

Great love to you and Chris from all of us here,

