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ABBAY OF GETHSEMANI
TRAPPIST, KENTUCKY

Dec. 18, 1963

Dear Victor:

Thanks for your good letter: I find you much more scrupulous about the treatment of religious subjects than most artists would be. In fact the use of the "vexillum" or cross-flag in the iconography of the Resurrection is not common these days. I suppose it is a late medieval motif, suggested by the Crusades. In any event there is no reason on earth why you should even give it a second thought. The flag is simply a sign of victory, and I suppose it means that the artist wants you to recognize the resurrection, in case the tomb does not look sufficiently like a tomb. There are certainly other ways of doing this.

Today is a bright snowy morning, and it helps make one ready for Christmas. I hope that January will bring us some nice days. The middle of the month is out of the question for me, (from the 18th to the 26th) because then we are on retreat and incommunicado. But in any case, things will work out and we will be able to get together in due time. Just let me know when things seem convenient for you, and we can plan something.

I like Pascal, and of course he was a fervent devotee of Port Royal where they took the spiritual life seriously. I wonder if I sent you the meditation on Julien Green? I enclose one, it may have something in it of a sardonic comment on that background, but on the other hand I have no notion of saints being dull. It is only the pseudo saints that are oppressive. The real ones, from what I have read, are exceedingly lively. Of course canonization manages to wash all the liveliness out of them and reduce them to safe limits, so that the bien pensants will not be disturbed.

I wish you all the best of everything for Christmas. May the joy of the ~~season~~ season be fully yours. My blessing to you both, and I promise special prayers on that day.

Most cordially in Christ,

Tom.