

Dear Sons & Daughters (I'll give you love ones) &  
This year's Easter H was essentially written

~~Our past letters have all been written~~ by Roni and JJ, as witness the enclosures. My contribution will therefore consist mainly of a little nostalgia and a few introductory notes. Looking back, I see that the subjects of the previous Easter letters were as follows: 1972: persevere in the faith; 1973: Reading books, maintaining balance and staying open; 1974: Keep growing, read the Bible, and moderation in all things; 1975: Keep trying, don't get discouraged, like Christ on Calvary - keep getting up! I'd never reviewed the previous years before in preparing an Easter letter, and I found it rather interesting that I was nonetheless pushing a pretty consistent line. The key words may be slightly different, but it's the same basic philosophy. The key words I'd pre-chosen for this year (before the faith testimonys of Roni and JJ) were FAMILY (COMMUNITY) - BALANCE - FIRST!! In other words, ours is a religion of the present, of the present, a religion of balance, a religion for others - that puts others first! For YOU, God is where YOU are FIRST!! I would then have elaborated re Col 3:1-4; 1 Cor 5:16-8; and Mt 22:37-40. In the latter, I'd stress that there are TWO parts to the ONLY commandment in the new law! It's fine to place the welfare of your neighbor and your concern for him very high, but don't ever forget there is a FIRST part that says you must love God FIRST, THEN your neighbor. If your love doesn't proceed from the source of love, then there's no way it can complete the circuit (even through your neighbor) back to the source!! Finally, consider Mt 7:21. That is the key to who it is that you must always put ahead of self. Now, before yielding the pulpit to Roni and JJ (and I yielded to them precisely to encourage your participation in their central-to-all-life dialog), let me just ramble briefly on the resurrection (hereafter "ROR"). The oldest NT book of the Bible dates from 20 years after the ROR. No one in the NT claims to have seen the ROR (only the empty tomb, and later - the risen Christ). The living teaching office of the Church is not above the Word of God, but serves it. The Church's grasp of truth changes and develops (even as you and I - who are the Church - do). Scripture, as the Word of God, does not escape the limitations of history, that is, it presents time-conditioned beliefs. (This is why you shouldn't be too worried about the Standard and the Catholic Standard, as representative of the "backward-lookers", since time will overcome them and they are ultimately doomed to lose as salvation history progresses onward.) Remember too, that the magisterium usually operates via tacit tolerance of developing corrective views, (i.e., they still have never retrieved their flats against Galileo), so never wait for new affirmations. All of this is to highlight what I agree with Fr Raymond Brown is the main threat to the Church (and I'd add, the US) - right wing vigilantes against change!!! Life does go on - THANK GOD!! So, move with it - THIS IS THE MAIN POINT OF THE ROR!!! Namely, the essence of the ROR is TRANSFORMATION!!! We must GROW, and we grow via relating to our fellowmen where and how we actually find him where we are, AND, we are FIRST of all mainly located in our FAMILY (then the neighborhood and the office, etc). So, lets try to first of all, in the year born with this Easter resolve to: Dialog personally with each other, love and help each other, etc, in the splendid example herein of GOLI and JJ, DASH, MARY, Mom and Dad

Hi,

10

Mon.

Dad, things just aren't working out for me lately. Today after I called you we went over to sign the lease and one of the girls already living in the apartment said she wanted it. The landlady told us we could have it since they had previously said they didn't, but I wouldn't feel right taking that girl's house from her right behind her back. Besides the rent was raised to \$325.00. I hope writing that check ~~won't~~ won't cause problems. I would have waited but I was so sure. I'm really discouraged, especially because I liked that apartment. She (the landlady) has another smaller one with two bedrooms for \$250.00. The three of us are considering that one, but two of us would have to share a small bedroom. ~~It's a small room~~ I figure we can get more for the money else where. I just wish I knew where. Living in an apartment would be cheaper than the dorm if we could sublet it to someone for the summer. I realize that if we do find one ~~that~~ I should get a job to make up the difference in money. Sometimes I wonder if it's all worth it, yet I know it will be if I can get things together.

Recently Lea (one of the girls I'll be rooming with) and I were talking about God. Lea reminded me a lot of Mom in that she said she has been praying that things will work out for us. Talking to her

has kind of brought me out of a shell I've been hiding in so long that I'd almost forgotten I've been so mixed up in my feelings about God that I kind of said forget it all. I was always scared to come and talk to you and Mom because I was afraid I'd hurt you too much if I rejected something that's so important to you. So I lied instead. I pretended to go to church when I really didn't. Somehow though, I always felt that you knew anyway. I don't want to hide it any longer. I need your help.

Lately I've been trying to pray, but when I do I feel ~~to~~ either hypocritical or unworthy. There are something I want to believe but I just can't. Church means nothing to me. St. Bernadette's is just a big place where people go and pretend to be praying when their minds are elsewhere. I know it's not like that for everyone, especially you and Mom. You all are so good and truly Christian, that I feel so damn guilty I can't be like you. Since I can't find meaning in the sacraments I feel wrong in praying. It's like rejecting God then wanting Him again.

Things just haven't been going right for me lately and somehow I feel like it's God saying, "see you need ~~me~~ me." This letter has been hard for me to write. It's something that's been building up

inside me for a long time. I'm sorry I've  
disappointed you, but I try really I do.  
I tried going to church down here but  
it seems like such a show to me. I love  
you and I don't want to lie to you  
any more. I believe in God, but I feel  
scared to ask his help when I reject his  
Church.

I said I was confused, I'm not sure  
exactly what it is I believe. I feel  
better I have told you this, yet I'm  
worried what you'll say.

Monica

P.S.

Mom I didn't mean to exclude you <sup>when</sup> ~~what~~ I  
was talking, really I wasn't. In the beginning  
I just started telling Dad about the  
apartment. The rest is meant to be addressed  
to you as well.

18 March 1976

Bless you, Dear Monica!

For ~~your~~ beautifully honest letter (and the trust in us which it implied) of 15 Mar Mom and I thank you and praise the Lord! FIRST: Relax, you haven't disappointed us; SECOND: Don't expect any FINAL answers and sure fire directions from us, since there simply aren't (in this world) any final answers! (The latter, you see, is PRECISELY where faith comes into the picture, and that's possibly at the heart of the problems of the youth of today - they have been raised in a terrific super-pseudo scientific era when the technologist ERRONEOUSLY lead them to expect that precise answers can readily be found for everything. One cure for this "we-can-know-it-all theory might be to compare the categoric assertions of a science book of today with one of 20-30 years ago!) Anyhow, please be reassured by the realization that faith is not only an intensely personal thing (one-on-one with God), but it is a GIFT OF GOD; i.e., YOU can't earn it, and your parents can't PASS IT ON!!! So, what you are now in the process of we might call, truly, theologizing - i.e., theology, as some St. said long ago is merely "faith seeking understanding," and THAT is the life's WORK OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL EVER BORN! (Thus, you may recall the term/phrase "final perseverance", which is just another way of saying that we're wondering and exploring right up to the very end of our lives.) So, what you're doing, then, is searching for your own meaningful-to-you answers to the basic questions of life: where did I come from, why am I here, and where am I going? NOBODY else's answers will do precisely because each of us is UNIQUE, and the final decision is ours (which is why Graham Greene says, "In the final analysis, everyone dies alone!"). But enough generality, let's get to your letter AFTER a brief parenthetical digression re your apartment, thus: (No problem with the check, but let me know - are you holding it, is Lea, or has it been destroyed? Second, it's God's will, and you can be sure something better (even if you do not initially perceive it as such) is in the offing (at least I've always found such resignation to be rewarding in the long run).) Now to the heart of your letter:

First, I'm delighted to hear that you're talking about God, and praise the Lord that you have someone like Lea to talk with about it. Second, I'd be wrong if I said you didn't have anything to worry about in talking to me about this, because, even though you don't, it hasn't always been this way. You can look upon me as a visible example of what - praise the Lord (and I'm no charismatic, I'm just truly so grateful to God for what I see happening) - is NOW starting to happen to you, namely: WE'RE BECOMING! I ain't the guy I was two or even two years ago, and you won't next year be the person you were a year ago, BECAUSE we're both into relating to PEOPLE, which (DIALOG) is the ONLY way we can develop (BECOME)! People dialoging about their essence (the three basic questions, again) is merely a micro-mirror of what the TRINITY is all about, and THAT is the very essence of BEING (whereas, we're only becoming), i.e., God the Father reflects on Himself, and being ALL, His idea of Himself is also ALL, the Son, whose reflection back to the Father (as well as the Father's transmission to the Son) is the Holy Spirit. The TRINITY is merely (what a dumb adverb!) the Divine ~~thing~~:

dialog. Maybe this little sketch can help you to appreciate the vital importance of human dialog, which in turn will make you realize how grateful I am for you starting a real dialog, rather than playing games at dialog and trying to say only things you think are un-hurtful to me - which isn't dialog at all, and hence we can't grow through it, so what good is that. But you've got the idea by now. I'm only sorry the letter was hard to write, though I certainly can understand (knowing the old me) why. (Like you, I mean us where I say I.) Now, there're only two other things (would you believe three?) I want to address:

First - Church. Believe me, I understand. The fault is NOT yours! Most priest simply are not talking to us. They are "up there" or "over against" or "outside" us, and mostly talking to and for themselves. This goes for their saying of mass as well as for their preaching, and extends to their whole demeanor. In short, they ain't LISTENING! They are NOT open to dialog. Little wonder that we drop out. In all honesty I get nothing out of going to Church from most priest, and keep going in spite of them to pay tribute to God who has been so good to me. But in a way I consider it a penance, but I feel I owe it. Maybe you too may somewhere in the future at least come to this point, like after either a few great sorrows or a few great blessings - both of which have a way of leading us to God. Meanwhile....

Second - Now that you've begun really experiencing God (which your talking about Him betrays) DON'T STOP! That is, keep up the search. Talk to anybody you want to about it (because all of us search to the day we die), and give the most credence to those whose ways reflect the greatest spirit of selfless charity ~~and love~~!! And....

Third - prayer: Opening yourself to others is the highest form of prayer. You don't have to be on your knees reciting formulas. I'd commend an attempt to develop a perpetual awareness of God. It's a game I play, but I've found it helpful, to wit: try to imagine Jesus is right there with you, alone or in whatever group you happen to be. You don't have to phantacize further - just think of Him as present, and LISTENING. You might be surprised at some of the responses such an attitude brings forth.

Finally, a personal note. I wish I could say, by the numbers, now here's what you have to do, and this is right and this is wrong. That's the protective parent complex speaking, the first inclination. But that is a wrong inclination. Rather, I rejoice in your striking out to find MONICA! This is existentialism - seeking to find yourself and God through dialoging honestly about the meaningful things. Sure it's dangerous and fraught with the possibility of mistakes. But I can't make you me, even, God forbid, if I wanted to. You've got to become MONICA, and you can only do that by dialoging, inter-personal relations. This is why the idea of community is so basic to Christianity. Again, life is in the pattern of the Divine dialog which is the Trinity - a question of In ter-personal Relationships in the ULTIMATE sense.

*Now, don't worry about any of this you might not do. You're on the right track.*  
L.H.C. D.

MOM AND DAD,

IT WAS A VERY INTERESTING LETTER. I MUST SAY THAT I WAS GREATLY RELIEVED AFTER I READ IT. ALL THE WAY HOME I IMAGINED ALL SORTS OF TERRIBLE THINGS THAT MIGHT CAUSE YOUR REQUEST FOR MY THOUGHTS. MY INITIAL REACTION WAS A SIMPLE SHRUG OF THE SHOULDERS SAYING "SHE'S JUST GOING THRU DEM CHANGES". SHE'S CONFUSED AND MIXED UP. AREN'T WE ALL? SHE'LL SORT THINGS OUT AS LONG AS FRIENDS AND FAMILY DON'T LET HER DOWN. BY THIS I MEAN THAT SHE (ALL OF US) NEED FEED BACK TO OUR IDEAS. WHETHER ITS AFFIRMATION OR REJECTION ITS NECESSARY TO MAKE CONCLUSIONS. IN THE END, I FEEL THAT THE CONCLUSIONS/DECISIONS ETC. MUST BE MADE BY HER ALONE.

AFTER REREADING THE LETTER, HOWEVER, I CONCLUDED THAT, AS FAR AS CHANGES GO, THESE PARTICULAR TRANSITIONS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN MANY. AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF A GOD, A YEARNING FOR THE CAUSES OF PAIN AND PLEASURE/GOOD AND BAD FORTUNE, THE MYSTERIES OF THE UNIVERSE, OUR PURPOSE AS HUMANS ETC. ETC.. IF I HAD ONLY ONE THOUGHT TO EXPRESS TO HER IN THIS TIME OF CONFUSION IT WOULD BE: THERE ARE NO FINAL CONCRETE ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS PLAGUING YOU NOW UNLESS YOU ARE WILLING TO ACCEPT AT LEAST ONE BASIC BUILDING BLOCK WITHOUT THE "SCIENTIFIC WORLDS" PROOF, THAT IS BLIND FAITH. TO ILLUSTRATE, THE MOST COMMON ANSWER, THE ONE YOU HAVE CHOSEN/ACCEPTED/RECEIVED, IS FAITH IN GOD. AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, WITH THIS ACCEPTANCE/BELIEF/FAITH ALL SUCH QUESTIONS SHOULD DISAPPEAR; OR AT LEAST THEY CAN BE WORKED OUT IN CONJUNCTION WITH A DEITY. IF SHE HAS DECIDED ON THE "GOD" ROUTE, I WOULD DIRECT ONE LAST COMMENT TOWARD WHAT I INTERPRET AS HER MAJOR CONFLICT (AT LEAST THE ONE EXPRESSED IN THE LETTER) - GOD VS CHURCH. ANY GOD I CAN IMAGINE IS NO MORE A ROMAN CATHOLIC GOD THAN HE IS A BUDA GOD. THERE ARE MANY MORE IMPORTANT AND BASIC RULES TO A RIGHTEOUS LIFE THAN VISITING CHURCH ON SUNDAYS OR FASTING DURING LENT ETC.. NOT THAT THESE ARE USELESS ACTS BY ANY MEANS; SIMPLY THAT REJECTION OF THEM DOES NOT CONNOTE REJECTION OF GOD.

ALL OF THIS, I FEEL, YOU COVERED, IF NOT IN BLACK AND WHITE-THEN BETWEEN THE LINES.

# 3 SON

*John*