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Mann, Klaus

Camp Crowder, 1943-10-16

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T/S Klaus Mann (32697270)
Post Public Relations Office
Camp Crowder, Missouri

October 16, 1943

My dear Chaplain,

This is to ask you for an interview, to discuss a matter of vital importance to me.

I want to join the Catholic Church, or rather, I want your advice as to whether my desire to do so is sincere and profound enough to make me acceptable.

I am 36 (almost 37) years old; born in Munich, Germany, as the oldest son of Thomas Mann, the writer. I am a writer myself. I was inducted into this Army on January, 4, 1943, and, on September, was naturalized as an American citizen.

My present religious status is that of a Protestant: I was baptized and brought up as a member of the Lutheran Church (as were, incidentally, both my parents and my five sisters and brothers).

But Protestantism has never meant much to me; it is the Catholic Church which always attracted me and in the ritual of which I sense, not only the grandeur of an age-old, admirable tradition, but also, and above all, the expression and revelation of ultimate metaphysical truth.

There were qualms and scruples, however - philosophic, moral and political - which prevented, or delayed my conversion. I may try to explain to you, personally, of what

nature these scruples were^d and to what degree they still keep intriguing me. At any rate, I feel - intensely and positively - that these doubts or reservations are less essential, less cogent, at this point, than is the inner voice advising me to seek the guidance of the Catholic Church and to address this appeal to you, in your capacity as a priest and spiritual adviser. I want to go overseas: in fact, I hope that my trans-Atlantic assignment may come through before long. Under the circumstances, it seems unwise to postpone any longer what I considered to do for so many years.

Will you please let me know when it would be convenient for you to see me. I can ~~be~~ always be reached at this office (except Wednesday when I have to go to Joplin, to help reading the proofs of our Camp Crowder "Message.")

Sincerely yours,

27/12/11

Chaplain's Room, Chief of the
Catholic Dept.

Brink 104

*

My dear Chaplain:
This is to ask you for an
interview; ~~the~~ concern ~~is~~ of
great importance to me.

~~I am writing you~~
~~I want to request~~
~~you to want to~~
The Catholic Church,
I want your advice as to whether
my desire to do so is
sincere and so far removed from
making me acceptable to ~~the~~
~~Catholic community.~~

You I am 36 years (almost 37) years
old; was born in Munich,
Germany, the eldest son
of the father, a writer, and
am a writer myself. I was

[illegible]

However, it has always been (at least)³⁾
which really a Mithras and
in the rituals of which I sensed,
not only the grandeur of
an age-old, ~~celestial~~^{symbolic} tradition,
but also, and above all, the
expression and revelation of

Among the heroes and the gods of my youth
I found great Christians: from
Augustus and Nero to Aquinas
and his Sisters, from the German Renaissance
and the Baroque to Voltaire and
Pascal to Blake to Whitman
from William Blake to Whitman
Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Verlaine, Mallarmé,
I have always found the most
and the most beautiful things
and the most beautiful things
in his work. It was his
power and infinite grace that
guided me whenever I
was in danger to go astray. There may
be times when I

may have been times when I was
hardly aware of his presence and
~~unconsciously~~ thought I could get
along without his ^{presence} and
guidance. But ~~before long~~ ^{before long} I have
always found back to him.
~~What is more~~ Andre Gide seems to
echo my own expression when
he writes, in his "Nouveaux Nouragues":
~~un homme~~ — after so many intellectual
achievements and experiments —
"Je reviens à toi, Sirene
Christ, comme à Dieu dont nous
êtes la forme vivante. Je suis
las de mentir à mon cœur.
C'est donc que je m'abandonne
pourtant, alors que je croyais
te nous fuir, à une divin de
mon enfance."
Andre Gide is a French Protestant
in whose complex character are
philosophy Calvinist ~~traditions~~ elements
and strongly blended with pagan-
Platonic moods, and the traditions of Dosto-

generation mysticism, and the ^{poly} ~~great~~ ⁵⁾
 traditions of French Skepticism (à la
 la Montaigne) and the humanist
 of the 18th century Revolution.
 Gide's influence on my thought
 has been ~~unmistakable~~ that has lasted.
 The T.Y. most recent book, published
 when I was already in the Army,
 is an expansion monograph on
 this French novelist and
 philosopher (A. B. and the Crisis).
 (Columbia U. Press, N.Y., 1943). In this book, I
 am in favour of Gide's

spiritual indifference, his
 intellectual ~~indifference~~ ^{curiosity} —
 in a dialogue ~~with~~ ^{intelligence} ~~curiosity~~ ^{intelligence}
 against the ~~orthodoxy~~ ^{orthodoxy} of his ~~illusions~~ ^{illusions}
 around and what he called
 Catholicism. This is his motto
 and summary of his religious
 faith — in contrast to (Cantel's)
 faith. ~~un~~
 To Gide, God is not a fact but a
 problem; a ~~problem~~ ^{problem} that has to be
 solved; a goal that has to be
 reached.

I mention these things, not in
order to ^{leave} ~~leave~~ you with indignant
litigious reflections, but to give
you a notion of the qualities ~~and~~
which pre-eminence are so far, to
take the disease out and graft
the Catholic dogma. These qualities
are ~~undoubtedly~~ ^{indeed} ~~at~~
manifest and profound. There was
for ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~political~~ ^{political} ~~action~~
of the ~~Church~~ ^{Church} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~disappearance~~
instead of the ~~barriers~~ ^{barriers} ~~which~~ ^{which} ~~was in~~
the ~~past~~ ^{past} ~~of the~~ ^{of the} ~~that~~
Spain. But I must ~~be~~ ^{be} ~~that~~
the ~~affairs~~ ^{affairs} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~political~~
by ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~most~~ ^{most} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~political~~
of ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~consistent~~ ^{consistent} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~political~~
at ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~position~~ ^{position} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~political~~
and ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~adoption~~ ^{adoption} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~political~~
on ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~stand~~ ^{stand} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~political~~
under ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~stand~~ ^{stand} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~political~~
in ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~stand~~ ^{stand} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~political~~
leading ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~stand~~ ^{stand} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~political~~
mutual ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~stand~~ ^{stand} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~political~~

~~For the amount to fast for.~~

I want to go overseas in fact, I
have my Trans-Atlantic assignment may
be for some time longer. This is not
the amount under the circumstances,
it seems now wise ~~to defer my departure~~
to postpone any longer what I consider
to do for so many years. ~~Regardless of~~
~~all my~~ I wish to join the
Police Force, and I shall
quite fully appreciate any advice
and assistance you may be
able to give me.

I can be reached at his office
(Room 414) during most of the
day (except on Wednesday) and
you will always be able to call on you
at almost any ~~time~~ hour
you may find convenient.

WJ