

Daniel Berrigan

Dear Daniel,

The last time I wrote to you when you were in prison, the officials at Danbury opened my letter and returned it to me. It had the dangerous message of telling you that the eight of us prayed for you at our family evening meal every day of your sentence.

So now that you are in jail again, I take the open letter route, as a more assuredly direct way of reaching out to you. We pray again, for you, brother Phil, and seven other friends in the spirit, imprisoned for digging a hole in the White House lawn.

A grave, I believe it was meant to symbolize--to represent all of the countless graves we are preparing, as a nation, through the nuclear arms holocaust for which we stockpile. Perhaps a place of interment, too, for our moral values which it took only 200 years to bury. Are you also suggesting honorary pall bearers? Perhaps officials from the CIA, FBI, State Department, and Pentagon? Would Henry Kissinger be the appropriate liturgical celebrant to pronounce the funerary rites?

It is not lost upon those of us who regard you as our public conscience that you have now re-entered a tomb. That prisons ought to be so regarded has even been observed by literary critics who have given the label of "Lazarene Literature" to that body of

work based on the prison experience (and named after the resurrected Lazarus.) So much of your own recent work is of this genre. Thus in spirit you join that group of authors who have written from their jail experience: St. Paul, St. John of the Cross, Dostoyevski, Koestler, Martin Luther King, Solzhenitsyn, Wiesel, Frankl, a tragically long list.

Well, Daniel, we pray for you. In that way, perhaps we can share in your sacrifice. That we love you, you know already. That we feel inadequate to the task that you are helping do, we confess. But while our prayer is a lament for what you are suffering, it is a hymn, too, of thanks of God for his messengers: Daniel and Philip, Jim McNeill and Mike Dunham, Lee Griffith and Bob Smith and Beth Centz, Brian Widelitz and Joe Maynes.

The hole you dug in the White House lawn not only goes down--it goes up, too, like the incense of prayer.

Peace in deed,

Harry James Cargas