

Château de Muzot-sur-Sierre
June 26, 1926

My dear Balthus,

So you're about to travel again, and see once more this beautiful Italy that I have two steps away from me, and yet I never take these two steps! I have been invited to Milan, to Venice, to Florence . . . I have the necessary visa in my passport . . . but I am no longer "a traveling man," the least thing is enough to stop me, and none of the trains, not even the express the color of a maybug with all its banners that I see passing my balcony at Bellevue every day, tempts me in the slightest. I will end up with little bearded roots, and people will have to come by from time to time to water me (but not too much, that would remind me of cold feet).

My dear, I wanted to tell you: please don't set off without sending me your Poussin (*my* Poussin, I say with pride). It is as if my walls have changed their attire to receive it in dignified fashion: it will probably be their sole adornment. Most of the room has been prettied up, this time with green panels I came up with, and now I don't want to put the old engravings back where they were (however much I miss them, since they kept me very charming company . . .).

I would like to hear your opinion, Balthus, about J. M. Sert's church, currently on view in Paris. Have you seen the decorations, and did you subscribe to Claudel's article about them? (Some of it's wonderful.) He says there

must be a painter of our time who can pull off the miracle: creating entirely out of paint an inner lining to a cloak of God. Only a Spaniard or a Russian would be inclined to attempt so enormous a task in our era, this summa of painting that would have to be at the same time a summa of life and of faith. Send me a little note about it? If it wouldn't be too revolting for you to suddenly have a poor quill between your fingers instead of a brush, send word sometime, even if you're already in Italy. Where are you going first?

I hear that the French *Malte*¹³ has come out, but I haven't yet seen a single copy; I'm going to telegraph Betz about it . . .

A thousand tokens of friendship to all three of you.
With all my love,

RENÉ