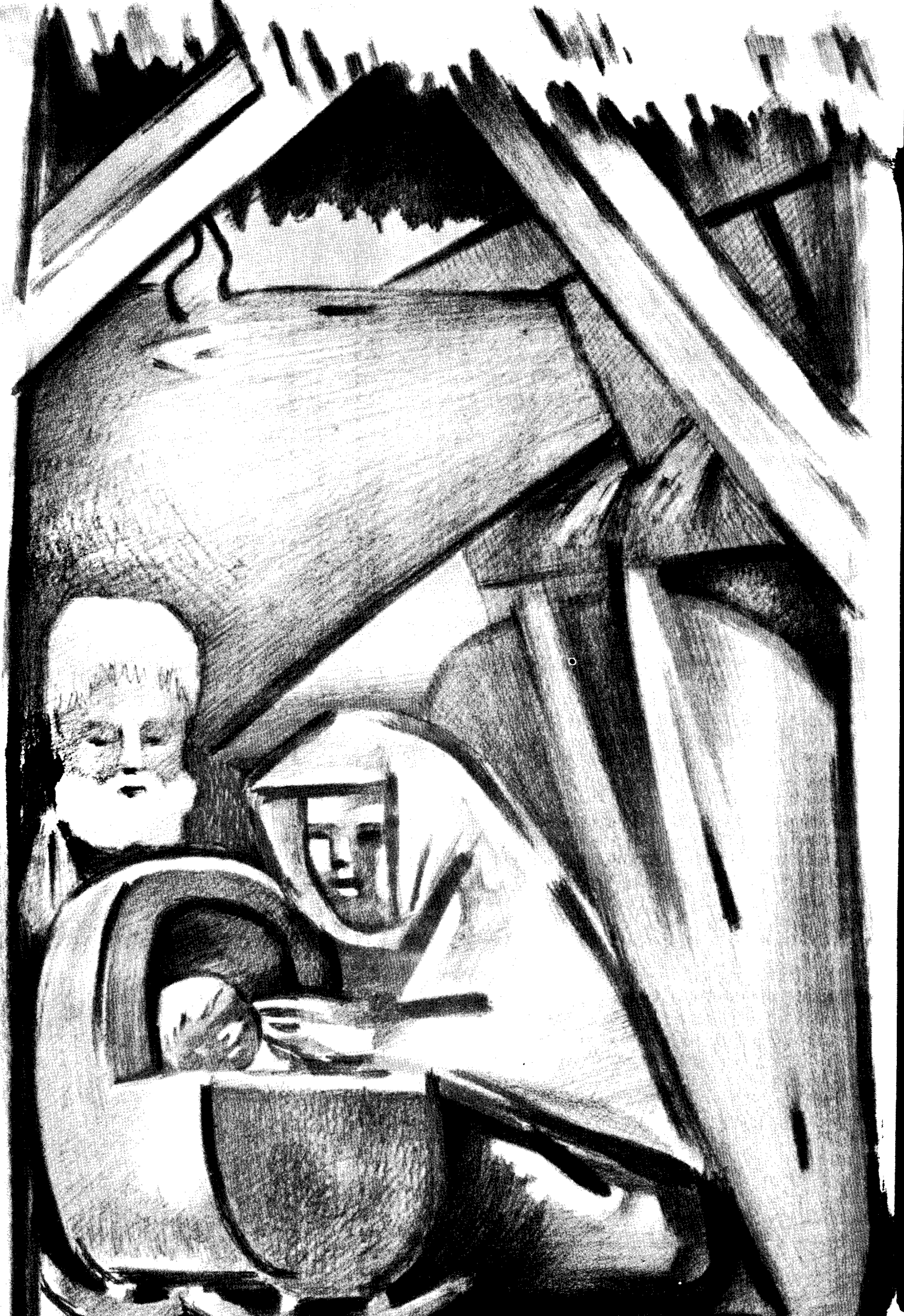

the pews, and who welcomes suggestions and observations. These artists seem eager to place at the disposal of their fellow-man their God-given talents. One leaves with a deeper feeling and understanding of the artist and his work. There comes to mind the comment made in the course of just such a discussion with an artist of recognized merit — that he derived incomparably greater satisfaction from a piece of work placed in a church than in a museum.

In the past, it seems, the Church influenced art and artists by giving them work. They, in turn, helped the Church through their art. It seems to me that close coöperation between the two to-day would result in mutual advantage. Your effort to bring this about, by presenting to your readers established contemporary artists, is highly commendable and most gratifying. May we have more of it.

Yours truly,
THE REVEREND J. WODARSKI

NEW YORK, N. Y.

To the Editor of LITURGICAL ARTS.
Dear Sir:

I wish to congratulate you for the wonderful lithograph by Jean Charlot which appeared to me like a ray of sunshine in the last issue of LITURGICAL ARTS. In publishing it as a frontispiece in a magazine which has already done much for religious art, you do justice to a great artist whom I have the pleasure to know and who honors me with his friendship.

Jean Charlot is French, and everyone knows that the ten fingers of a Frenchman cannot easily be replaced nor, as everyone agrees, the treasures of imagination, beauty, and faith which can be extracted from our old Christian soil. But it was in Mexico that the vocation of Charlot gained in strength and that his talent reached its full development. In Mexico, where, in the midst of one of the oldest civilizations on earth, Mayan art revealed its splendor to this artist. Henceforth, Mexico will inspire all of Charlot's work, already considerable and too little known. It is in the United States that Charlot has established his residence and he now lives in the peace of the State University at Athens, Georgia, where he is a member of the staff of the art department. Here, with his wife and children, he teaches his pupils and proceeds with his own work.

What I love in Charlot's work is that his painting speaks to the eye; not only the eye that looks absent-mindedly through the window and registers whatever is shown it, but to the organ of sight, to the eye in its fulness, which searches and dissects everything it sees. It is painting which attempts to solve all problems from the angle of vision. Charlot's work is massive and powerfully constructed. He does not paint merely on the flat or square surface of a canvas, but on four dimensions and as on a sphere, of which Raphael said that it was the most beautiful volume in the world and the very image of perfection. Everything comes out in sharp angles and, to the Italian perspective, Charlot often prefers Cézanne's, where lines meet in the foreground and not in the background. It is volume and space which are brought out by Charlot. In that sense, his paintings are related to those of the cubists and, through them, to the great school of the primitives.

Jean Charlot paints essentially in a fresco manner, and he has infused new life in the bloodstream of religious art. He escapes the conventional practices of academic discipline where so many have tried to emprison, not always without success, unfortunately, Christian inspiration and emotion. In a century where life has been altogether transformed by industry and invention, some would like the Church to confine herself, in artistic manifestations, to the teaching of the gothic and renaissance periods. While truth never grows old, many would like to have her live in old-fashioned surroundings and be decked in the rags of the past. In art, as in everything else, what matters, once wrote Paul Claudel, is to venture, what matters is to go forward, what matters is to believe in God.

And that is why a French painter of my acquaintance once told me — as a joke, of course — that he wished all French cathedrals were destroyed so that the country could be transformed into a huge workshop where new generations of artists would roll up their sleeves and work to rebuild under no other influence but that of their time, their surroundings, their temperament. In expressing this desire, little did my friend know that the war would so completely provide the answer.

Jean Charlot belongs to the school of those who know their business and who, knowing it, try to create, to invent new forms, rather than copy nature slavishly. Artists of this type want to give body to a work which would have an existence in itself and be independent of all that it borrowed from nature around it. The important thing is that the picture be there, sufficient in itself. No matter if such and such a personage lacks a big toe, or if in the Nativity — which is the subject of this letter — such and such anatomical detail is not scrupulously recorded. What matters is composition, imagination, color, movement, and everything that contributes to the very existence of the work and assures it perfect autonomy.

The Catholic Church, custodian of the truth, need not feel bound by tradition. She must move forward and not hesitate to undertake the boldest enterprises. The cathedrals, in their time, were not only outside of all then known aesthetic laws, but those of equilibrium as well. We must to-day forget the past and we must work with our time, utilize our own materials, our own discoveries. And we must listen to our artists, among whom Jean Charlot occupies a place of honor.

Yours truly,
PIERRE CLAUDEL.

ATHENS, GEORGIA

To the Editor of LITURGICAL ARTS:
Dear Sir:

You write me that many readers disliked my frontispiece, and to please tell them why I did it "ugly." It is an embarrassing question that should not be asked, or would you ask a father why he made his children ugly? Whatever they are to the outside world, children multiply in flesh and mind the idiosyncrasies of their begetter and thus seem beautiful to him. I coo and bill over my maligned frontispiece with as much conviction as a father toad cooing and billing over his toadies. Indeed the whole outer world and the outer world's children seem somewhat deformed to me.

What you ask of me is to fly out of my skin, as Georgia witches are wont to do, and from this outer vantage point give your readers an unbiased analysis of what makes me and mine tick.

Some of your friends, as quoted by you, find that in my opus Mary is not "as beautiful as they dream her to be." Beautiful is a term so debased to-day as to require further elucidation. Much pietistic literature, many pious images give of our Lady a version not unrelated to the professional beauty of gown-models and bathing beauties. I despise such achievements whole-heartedly, and indulge a creeping belief that unknown to them the musings of devout people in front of such images are not wholly devoid of what gives savor to the musings

of more rowdy gents in front of pin-up girls and Petty *femmes*.

The beauty of our Lady was and is wholly devoid of what America bluntly terms "sex-appeal," and thus is not for us sinners to apprehend. When our Lady appeared at Pontmain to small children and babes-in-arms exclusively, it was certainly no ill-will of hers that denied her sight to the good curate and his well-meaning parishioners, but rather the touch of sin that soiled their make-up. Mary's appearance that soothed and edified babes would have seemed to grownups that were not saints "fearful as an army arrayed for battle."

If an artist received the miraculous gift of reproducing our Lady as she is, it would be accompanied no doubt by a corresponding gift of prudence to stop him from ever flaunting his foolhardy accomplishment. In my "Nativity" the sketchiness of Mary's features is the only decent kind of homage that I know how to pay to her matchless beauty.

What line and color may portray without trespassing on forbidden ground are the trails along which the painter's devotion carries him, the mental and spiritual climate of his prayer with the brush. The more individual this delineation of one man's devotion, the stranger to the many perhaps, but also the more edifying for a group of people with like affinity.

In my case, my work is much concerned with Indian Mexico. At birth and throughout life and in death, Aztecs hug the earth with an intensity of comprehension unmatched by that of people who sit on chairs and not on the ground, sleep in beds and not on mats. This peculiar chumming with earth crept into this Nativity scene: all three members of the holy family stoop close to the ground to form a low-lying shape that people familiar with Indian mounds and Aztec pyramids may readily recognize. What could be a mere compositional device has also moral meaning. These attitudes rejoin beyond centuries and continents the Italian "Madonnas of Humility" that squat on the bare earth, for example Masaccio's in the National Gallery at Washington. Perhaps because a Madonna of Humility par excellence, this Italian Mary looks and acts like a Mexican Indian mother as she gravely fondles the Divine Papoose.

Besides racial considerations, style comes into play; that is the ingredient that differentiates art from nature. In his wonderful picture "A Joust Between Carnival and Lent" Breughel touches other matters besides Church and kitchen, presents unwittingly a summary of the history of style. The lanky tribe that pelts its foes with boiled leeks and salted herrings could stand for the masters that elongate the verticals — Byzantines, Greco, Gill. The fat folk that repulse the attack with cannon balls made of capons and fatted geese are the cartoon equivalent of the masters of spherical bulk — Giotto, Raphael, Rubens. The only type lacking is one of which Breughel had no concept, the photographic artist that despises all styles. Nowadays Barclay Street art steers joylessly its naturalistic course away from both thinness and fatness. It reminds one of the case of a mental patient that divided womanhood in two types: the broad ones, too animal to be wooed, the lean ones, too ethereal to be desired. Psychoanalysts rescued him from suicide.

My frontispiece is in kinship with the low and wide figures that Breughel's revellers stand for. The few people who are nowadays both conscious of style and concerned with liturgical arts favor rather the "lenten" tradition, the Eric Gill type of saints, underfed and oblivious of the pull of gravity. Because this bony art hovers much higher than do realistic plaster saints, its exponents are prone to claim that all saints in Heaven *do* watch their weight, and fulminate interdicts against other types of art. If true, us fat ones would be left in outer darkness — not only Charlot, but Giotto whose forms are as pregnant with grace as they seem pregnant with child, and Raphael who rounds breasts bursting with peasant milk, and Rubens whose painted mess of bosoms and hocks is a fearless tableau of the gifts of God.

May these lines allay some of the suspicion with which your thin friends view my work.

Yours truly,

JEAN CHARLOT.

BURLINGTON, VERMONT

To the Editor of LITURGICAL ARTS:

Dear Sir:

It is with fear and trembling that I write you about Father Reinhold's criticism of Saint Mark's Church in the November number of LITURGICAL ARTS. One hesitates to call into question anything said by a man who has such a thorough understanding of the liturgical mind of the Church. However he offered two remarks, one concerning the plan of Saint Mark's and the other concerning its furnishings, which would seem to call for a comment from me; not in the sense of a "*homo volens sese justificare*," but rather in the interest of truth, and in the hope that such frank criticisms as his, and, I hope, such equally frank answers as my own may lead to a better understanding by all interested of this very contemporary movement on the part of liturgists, artist and architects alike, toward a more personal participation of the faithful in the liturgical functions of the Church, of which the mass is the most important.

To begin with Father Reinhold's second point, which has to do with the use of antependia, may I say that I am in agreement with him. It has never been our intention not to use them; but as is the case with many other small items not of necessity and not an integral part of the church structure, their acquisition has been put off until our budget would permit their purchase. So we are getting along with temporary cruets, sanctuary bell, baptismal font — though we built the baptistry — and the interior statues for the shrines of Mary and Joseph. It is our intention to have antependia which will be used at least during the celebration of the sacred mysteries.

Father Reinhold's first remark concerning the plan of the church calls for greater discussion, even more than can be given in a letter of this sort, because it goes to the very root of this whole question of the mass, the people, and the structure. He says in part: "since it is his [my] intention to have his 'parish family' in front of him, I think the splitting up of the congregation into three equally large parts, only one third being his straight *vis-à-vis*, is something which is not quite consistent with his first principles."

Now if Father Reinhold means that my first principles are to have my parish family in front of me for the celebration of the mass, then he has assumed something which is contrary to fact. From the "pastoral-theological" point of view, I have never thought of those offering mass with me as being in front of me, but rather gathered round me; much the same as a group of students might gather round the lecture table to watch their professor in chemistry perform an experiment. That is, in designing Saint Mark's all our thinking was concentric with the altar at the centre. In our minds we went out to our plot of land, selected the spot where we wanted our