The Angle

Volume 2004 | Issue 1

2003

Cathedral

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Cover Page Footnote

This poem is available in The Angle: https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol2004/iss1/13
I see the face of Mary
in this place,
and Jesus on the cross,

mahogany pews and stained glass—
a filled-up quiet—
fat snowflakes falling on emerald grass,
and worship while it rains.
The way my father washed my hands
when I was little,
my wedding day, all shaking nerves
and rattling bouquet,
three newborn babies’ faces, fingers, toes,
the rocking chair at 3 a.m.,
our late-night, muffled laughter,
soft music playing while the girls
read or drive their little cars around
the family-room rug,
and candle-lit dinners, we two alone at the kitchen table.
Here, too, are Thanksgivings in my steamy kitchen,
my brothers stealing pieces from the turkey,
sixteen of us (all here) around the lengthened table,
and building snow forts in the dark.

Wood smoke on an autumn day,
the words of God printed on a page,
and coming home.

Coming home
from a kick-of-leaves in the woods
damp, pink-cheeked, and cheery,
to hot baths and the smell of roasted chicken.
In this place are the every night dinners;
we listen to which crayon colors
were used in school, and who said what to whom,
as leftovers cool and harden on the plates,
and the little one grows wiggly, no one minds.

Reading quietly into my daughter’s wispy hair.
All the concerts, catching eyes,
the little wave, the grin, the look away,
all the card games, board games, dumb games,
fits of giggles, laughter, tears.

In this place is our lost baby,
and September 11th, which still makes me cry,
the sorrows, losses, diagnoses,
bare root tragedies,
all problems of the world
we cannot fix.

But
there is a balm in Gilead,
in this church, this holy place, this cathedral
where God waits to somehow bless,
where awe lives, where I am eight
where I have walked in, fresh from nothing,
where I have seen Him
for the very first time.