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Sunday Mass in July

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Sunday Mass in July

Saint John's Abbey

Rachel Wheeler

For mercy, we ask all too briefly,
embarrassed, in phrases blurred,
their words knocking at the edges,
rushing themselves, overlapping
like waves of an eager sea.

Glory, we sing, who later sit
on the black pews in summer heat,
fanning our faces with the worship aid,
our feet perched on the kneelers to ease
the sweat forming beneath our knees.

I tremble as I read the Lesson,
my voice a small thin needle
sewing sound from ear to ear.
A spider crawls across the cool
brick floor: I almost wish I were it.

Our belief, like pleas for mercy,
churns muffled, nearly deadened,
as if it traveled a great distance
to arrive at this vast stone church,
nobody quite together.

Beside the windows, bursting tiger lilies –
and last night's lightning storm
in the southern sky strobing
and streaking its cloudy cavern –
thrice proclaim with us: Holy.

The body-bread blossoms within,
watered by wine. For another week
I'm tended by the patient Gardener,
able yet to spread by inch, or half,
the Spirit's tendrils upon my trellis-life.

We leave in peace, the priest signing us
with the cross in the torrid air. What was
the word that, spoken, we might be healed?
Was it that low thunder throughout that,
like the organ, made all our innards
warble like unfed sparrows?



Saint Patrick, Chase Becker