

St. Theresa's Church

I was six when
Sitting between the uncomfortable pews
Of St. Theresa's Church
I saw my Father cry for the first time
Tears streaming down his cheeks
Over his freshly shaved beard
Dripping off his chin
Onto the book of psalms.

I was six, and
Looking up at the grand altar
The flowers out for Easter
The bolder rolled out from in front of the cave
On the right side of the church
A small stream flowing beside it,
All for the Messiah
I felt this mass would be different.

Mother to three, Grandmother to five, Great-Grandmother to two...

The priest said to us
From his pulpit, dressed in purple
I sat in the wooden pew
Counting my grandmother and her sisters
My cousins, my uncles, my father,
And then my brother and me,
I was six.

I looked for my Mom's signal
From the other side of the pew
I was six
Squeezing past uncles
Holding onto tissues
Climbing over knees and pocketbooks
Making my way to the outside aisle.

I was six
Walking to the back of an unfamiliar church
Holding my brother's hand
As if crossing a busy street
Being careful not to scuff
My new shoes.
Grasping the small glass pitcher in my hand
I walked up the center aisle

Past the distant cousins
With polish last names
Past the cave and stream
Past Uncle Kenny and Uncle Jeff
Trying desperately to hold it together
In front of their girlfriends
I pace up the long walkway
To the priest, waiting for
The water and wine.