

# Obsculta

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Volume 5 | Issue 1

Article 9

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July 2014

## Sunday Mass in July

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ISSN: 2472-2596 (print)

ISSN: 2472-260X (online)

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### Recommended Citation

Wheeler, Rachel. 2012. Sunday Mass in July. *Obsculta* 5, (1) : 32-33. <https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/obsculta/vol5/iss1/9>.

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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