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FOR ALL THE SAINTS

Donna Pucciani

In Heaven, canapés are being served.
St. Francis refuses the champagne, helps himself to a truffle
which he feeds to a stray dog that looks like a wolf.
He's not gaining any weight, his brown robes,
roped in the middle, hanging on him as they did
when he lived lice-ridden in a cave overlooking Assisi.

Christopher, accustomed to carrying important travelers
across raging rivers, is pumping iron on the porch,
Therese plants roses in the garden to shower
on those below. She still despises small crawling things,
brushing them aside in the dirt with a guilty curse.

The great St. Teresa, always on for a party,
joins Francis at the h'ors d'oeuvres table,
spinning around him with her long robes flying.
Elizabeth Seton, peculiarly American,
has removed her black fluted hat, replaced it
with a baseball cap of which her children would approve.

St. Lucy wanders around with four eyes--
two in her head, two in a cup, all looking
in different directions for God. Nobody knows
where God is. They just keep doing what they do best.

St. Peter has surprised everyone by taking up yoga,
specializing in headstands, reminiscent of his crucifixion.
Dressed in red for once, St. Patrick poses onstage
As a snake-handler, letting George handle the big ones.

Catherine spins heavenly garments on her wheel,
while Cardinal Newman approaches the piano
for a jazz rendition of "Lead, Kindly Light."
Bernadette is immersed in keeping the plumbing
at an even flow in a small village in the Pyrenees.
Anthony has spent the morning looking for lost children
and car keys. "Damned stupid people!"

"Ah, but you were one once," says Mother Theresa, tending a sleeping child, hobbling energetically through clouds without even the sustenance of caviar. She lends Martin a scissors to cut his cloak in half for a blanket. "There's a draft in here," she mutters toothlessly.

"By the way, has anyone seen God lately?" bawls Winifred, drawing water from her well. "Not since the day he threw me off my horse," retorts Paul, still nursing his faith and his bruises. "I'm here," booms a disembodied Voice. "Your jobs are over, remember? You're retired, you clueless bunch of workaholics!"

"It's like we still feel for those fools down there," murmurs Francis. Joan of Arc and Ignatius give thumbs up, their armor shining in the sun. She says to him, "So, dude, we screwed up, too. All this fighting for the Lord, and look what happened. It's like King Arthur, man, all this righteous battle nonsense and nothing ever changes. Like, don't they ever learn?"

"Oops, gotta run," says God. "There's a bunch of freaks slapping Bibles and calling anything in a veil the anti-Christ. Women and children, bleeding and torn, are lining up at the gates. Peter, grab the keys and move. There's some crackpot down there making a speech, wants me to bless America. What? I shouldn't bless little Muhammad who lost his foot in a land mine yesterday?"

"I had a dream!" intones a black minister with a backwards collar. "Oh, don't start that," cries the angel Gabriel. "Has God disappeared again? Always seems to vanish when you need her most." Buber pipes up, "Not dead. Only in eclipse," as he cuts a wedge of Brie.