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## Homily

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## Homily

I went to church today.  
Not to pray to a Sunday God  
who watches benignly  
from his rock-crystal heavens  
and meteor-bound spaces  
this cozy tradition of  
congregational catharsis:  
untouched, unmoved  
a brusque blessing  
of frightened souls.

Nor did I think to praise Him  
in lieu of the questions  
that lingered for answers in my mind  
and also in their minds  
those whom I sat with on  
all sides of me  
waiting. Those familiar  
ice-cream-days faces  
whose pains were  
once ago so remote, an  
unsampled taste  
sure to be memorably bad.  
We waited, so long, to remember  
each other, and Denise  
who isn't here.

Did we miss something, Richard?  
Why did we wait so long  
for this meeting when it was so good  
(oh, so good) in those staircase days  
like kids without aunts  
when we sat and talked and loved  
life. Together we loved life  
and Joann and Karrie. We loved  
Tom, and John, Steve,  
and Denise  
who isn't here.

*continued*

I went to church today  
Despite the fact that our crying God  
had brought us all these questions  
but none of the answers for Denise  
who isn't here.

Because she was dead, and perhaps  
even with Jesus, as they said, but  
who could know  
would know  
in those October days when  
two million leaves rattled  
a colorful death in place of the  
hope we all had before

In our Calvinist days of  
sweet communion in rooms  
filled with a fragrant feast  
of haphazard people secure  
in each other's acceptance.  
In those ice-cream days, those  
staircase days  
when Denise was here  
and isn't.

Because she wanted to be dead  
not like us who keep breathing  
seemingly, because we still want to.  
And life functions quite according to plan  
on an unstated knowledge that  
we deserve everything  
including our sanity  
which we found out later  
much to our surprise  
not everyone had.

*continued*

Two white candles diminishing  
pale brick with which they  
enclosed this space to call it  
a church  
where today we are brought  
face forward to our mortality  
in polite conversation with a  
blue-paper God who likes  
gospel music. Time transfixed  
upon an altar, as the world  
in its passing  
pressed tears hard on us  
and we are driven to reflect on  
dull bronze and a prospect where no one  
is blamed, but all are at fault.

And who, in this whispered journey  
around a child's room, asleep  
may speak a fiercer answer.  
Cry in the stone faces  
of God's own image  
a word.  
That we, beyond doubt, have  
waited too long, to come  
together at last  
for no reason but knowing  
why is life  
if all we do is die  
worth more now than before.

*Robert Scholten*