

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/1

g emil reutter
Faith

Yellows, blues, reds stream out of the glass stained with the image of Mary. The dead Christ hangs from mahogany cross, my knees rest upon well worn leather, elbows lean on weathered oak pew. Smell of myrrh lingers in the air. I hear the piper finish off *Amazing Grace*, watch as the family trails after the metal box. Today I do not see the serpent slither on the terrazzo floor though I know he too comes to this place, sings words from his dead mouth tempting the weak; his darkness flows into himself.

And what of the soul of the one who has departed? What if heaven and hell are full and purgatory is closed? And if we are predestined to choose is man simply a pawn in a sad play?

Full moon illuminates the names on the stones that rest under statues of saints who look upward to the dark sky. The autumn air is dead. Leaves tumble along green brown grass. Ghosts rest in skeletons of trees. I sit here among them, never a word is whispered. They stay away from the dark dirt hole, harsh marble stones; from the satin of the box and white linen sheet. I challenge them, ask why they aren't in heaven, as a thousand dead eyes stare blankly.

I see the serpent slip between the stones his dead mouth muted, as he looks into the trees, slithers along trunks, until dawn when he descends into his dark hole.

I stand in morning light on the dew covered grass, in front of the stone with my family name. Place plastic flowers on the grave recite the only prayer I remember. I walk into the cool wind as I hear my name called. I don't turn to the voice. I don't look up at the tree.