



Fearless Catholic
Writing Camp

High School *Writers* Institute

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Writing Camp

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Moving Schools

I slipped on my tennis shoes over my trembling feet.
Starting a new school wasn't easy,
But once I arrived, I finally relaxed
And soon the stranger beside me made me laugh.

We were a small, foolish tribe,
But we would be friends for life.
At the end of the year, we parted happily,
Knowing next year would bring new family.

The next year arrived, just on time.
Our group was enlarged.
Our happiness took charge.
We had more than enough,
We were diamonds in the rough.
We ran around all day
Like children at play.

The third year came around.
We were shocked when the foot came down.
It trampled our dreams
And ignored our pleas,
But it is from this dark cave
That we found our way.

In the Solemn Stillness of the Church

In the solemn stillness of the church
I sat and listened to the priest's words
Everything was regular till I heard something new:
"This is the bread which shall be given up for you."

And in that moment, I saw something wondrous,
Angels and cherubim flying down from the sky,
A bright light shining down upon us all,
The brightest light I've ever seen. I was
Keen to know what this means

The priest lifted the bread up high,
And in that moment, I felt the ecstasy.
In that moment I felt like God was sitting next to me,
Knowing that God was calling me to something higher,
A purpose and a meaning that I had yet to desire.

As I sat around all these souls,
Knowing everyone of these souls has a goal,
My goal was to feel more
And more I was sure when I heard the call of God
And I was ready to answer with all of my heart and soul
All my life till I was no more.

Mice

Through cities, alleys, buildings, homes, and factories were filled with mice. There were some big mice and some small. Every time the big mice ate or wore something new, the small mice would do the same. The small mice worked all day not for them but for the big mice. The tiny mice wake up at 7:00 to go to work at 8:00 and get out at 7:00. They go to sleep at 8:00, and they repeat this every day.

In the few hours they have off, they look on their phones to see what the big mice do. If they wear something or do something new, they will do it, too. If they saw a big mouse in public you know they had to say "hello" or take a picture. These were their idols. Whenever a little mouse did something different, he would get laughed at.

The Cold

The cold seeps in. A lone figure, more shadow than man, sits alone in a corner. He never moves and just watches. Multiple fires are set up in different parts of the room, but they bring no true light. The cold comes in through the door, but is stopped by the fire. It stops and stares at the man. Filled with rage, it leaves the room. The light spreads, and it heats up. He knows the cold will return. He must leave this place.

He grabs his things and walks out. The dome is in the distance, but he can't make it there before the cold returns. He'll need to find a place to stop. The shack was good because it had firewood. But he must continue on. After walking for a while, he realizes he is a day's journey from the dome. But in the background he sees the cold creeping along the ground, grabbing life in its icy clutches before letting it go, frozen and lifeless. He needs to hurry.

As he looks around, he sees a house that he can stay in. He runs inside and slams the door and begins to search frantically for a place to start a fire. The cold arrives. Panicking now, he grabs a collection of furniture and sets it alight. The cold is foiled once again. The sun sets and soon it rises. He sets out again, determined to make it. As he approaches he sees the cold descending upon him. He begins to sprint. Almost there. The cold coming from all sides, he hits the wall of the dome.

As he searches for an entrance, it's closing in. Here – the door is here. He grabs the handle: freedom at last. Locked.

The next day, the dome dwellers look out their windows to see a figure more ice than man clutching the door handle as the cold seeps in.

When You Swim

In my life there have been times where I felt God.
Then, every hour and minute of last summer, when I was directionless,
I felt emotions of sadness but also hope.
A representation of God and my hope is the glass door at my home
Because that's where I saw the sun rise every morning.

When you swim through the deep blue ocean that some tread all their lives,
There's always obstacles and dark giants on the horizon.
But as you swim closer and progress, it comes to show
That the giants were shining all along,
Only darkened by the gaze of the viewer.
And one can come to realize that the giants
Are pieces of you that you just haven't
Looked at with the right gaze.

And only then, once you pass them,
Can you decide whether to keep them shrouded
Or to let their gleams illuminate your ocean
For better or for worse, which is up to you.

Litany of Sight

In times of desperation, hear my prayer,
Oh Lord who sits among the hallowed hum
Of angels' wings that beat and clap and drum.
Oh, Lord, hear fast this litany of despair,
A world you made for us to keep and care,
A world of wonder, beauty shining bright.
But human hands have darkened it as night
And took much more than what was our fair share.
Oh, Lord, come lift us from our evil plight,
Young souls that turn from you to worldly loot,
Replacing Eden's fruit with smoke and soot
From belching factories, limiting our sight.
For Lord, oh Lord, our gaze, it has been turned
From you to things of dust, to things of dust,
To wonderful at first, then mortal hurt.
Teach us the hallowed lesson to be learned
And open our eyes that we may see
Your face of love painfully that watches.

Samantha Court
Age 14

Burnt Skin

As I enter my small kitchen, I see the stove on, and hear the tortillas sizzle in the griddle. As I make my way to the fridge to get food, I try to not touch any equipment. As I walk back I hear *sssssspoof*. I then get a burning sensation on my left arm, and there it is, my skin has a gray square marked with a black outline.

I try to cool it off with a blow, then two blows.

I put water on it, but the burn won't go.

I peel off the burnt skin, but the gray won't leave.

It stays there, and it is still there. No matter how many times I try, it will always be here. Now every time I go to the kitchen, I always check if any equipment is on.

Thinking

Thinking can be overwhelming,
So many thoughts,
Too much to bear!

Thinking can be a map,
So many places to go,
You'll get lost!

Thinking can be emotional,
So many bad thoughts.
A waterfall of tears.

To think clearly
Talk to God,
He'll clear your mind!

The Open Cage

Glancing out the window.
Tulips and dewy grass.
How could one ever know the plot was to change?
Once I heard the news,
The world was locked away,
And I was alone, a canary in a cage.

As I counted my days, lying in my cage,
Lacking nourishment of spirit and mind,
My head turned and I noticed a radiant red light of temptation.
Gleaming, twinkling, too good to be true.
As my anger began to bubble inside,
A sudden sign appeared in my periphery.

The darkened cage of disease was open,
And a soaring light of freedom, faith, and hope
Filled my soul.
Free of masks to hide our beauty.
Free of distancing to restrict our joy.
Free of cages to keep us from soaring.

The One in the Mirror

Who's that in the mirror, practicing a smile?
A smile that's perfect, not clownlike or a frown.
It can't be a grin; that is too sneaky
Or over-confident.
Who's that in the mirror, brushing their
Hair? It's messy, unruly, standing up on all ends.
Who's that in the mirror, sat down with a
Razor? Shaving the hair that may seem improper.
Who's that in the mirror, wearing baggy clothes?
Lazy and unmatching, comfort over style.
Practicality seems more important than trends.
Who's that in the mirror, comparing their
Body? Too blind to see the masterpiece directly
In front of them?
Who's that in the mirror, who can't admire
Every aspect of themselves that makes
Them unique?
Who's that in the mirror, a perfect beauty,
A gift to the world, a sight to see?
That person in the mirror certainly isn't me.

The Beacon of Light

As I prayed to God for the soul of her,
I look up to Him with a sorrowful hurt.
People with a baby sleeping
As we heart-wrenchingly sing the song of our sorrows.

But like a candle is lit, the sun begins to rise.
As hope begins to shine,
A familiar stranger appears before my eyes.
She lightened the world as if she were a star in the sky.

As a flower blooms, the candle still shines.
The joy brings us life –
A symbol of resilience and strength,
Reminder to let go of strife.

So although the butterfly has left to the sky,
The butterfly will always be in our minds,
For God will always provide.

Light Speaks in the Luminous Mysteries

Water trickles down, with whispers of years past.
It knows the swift sound of His sandals on the grass.
Approaching the river's edge, wading in deep,
Rinsed with heavenly grace, He bows His Kingly head
The Light from the skies above,
Calls unto the land below,
"This is my Son with whom I am well pleased."

Guests arrive to eat and drink. The marriage feast begins.
The last drop of wine is poured, a mother's urgent plea is heard.
A stir in Jesus' heart.
The servants take His word, depart, retrieving jugs of water.
Light overshadows, water transforms. Wine flows forth.
Persuaded by His mother, the first miracle performed,
Though some had heard Him say,
"My time has not yet come."

Crowds gather on the shore, eager for the wisdom of God, clinging to His every word.
A cry for conversion, a plea to action, to be an apostle of the Lord.
Proclaim trust, have sorrow for your sins.
Listen when Light calls,
"Repent and believe in the Gospel."

Trusting Him, they climb the mountain's side.
Reaching the top they kneel in prayer, asking God to provide.
A shining look upon Jesus' face, beams of light, heavenly grace.
Our Savior, exalted. A vision of what's to come.
A cry from the Heavens shakes the ground,
"This is my Son whom I love. Listen to Him."

Here He sits among the twelve, angels upon His shoulders.
The hand of God breaks the bread, the wine is poured and offered.
The Light of God illuminates, giving to us saving grace.
Sinners, unworthy to receive, His Body and Blood.
A mystery so deep, when He says to us,
"Do this in remembrance of me."

Plain Old Sheep

There I was a plain old sheep...actually I was a young sheep minding my own business, eating grass just before I had to go to bed. Then the sky opened up, and there was a bright light, and there was music, and everyone was scared, but not me.

O, no. Not me.

I did what any sheep would have done. I started running in circles and bleating....*baaa....baaa*.

Then there was a voice, and it said, "Do not be afraid." So what did I do? I WAS AFRAID. How did the voice know I was afraid? Then it said something else, and I wasn't paying attention, so I didn't know, but then my shepherd picked me up and put me on his shoulders and said something about Bethlehem. We just came back from Bethlehem, but that did not matter. I was going to Bethlehem whether I wanted to or not. On the way there, I saw this beautiful star. That's all about the star.

When we got to Bethlehem we went into a little tiny stable. And there were other people. There were one, two, three people. There was a very beautiful lady, a tall, strong man, and the sweetest, brightest, cutest baby. I felt some urge to go and cuddle with him and he didn't cry. He stayed there all night and the man and lady were very kind and gave me hay.

When morning came, the shepherds left looking very happy. Something was missing. What could it be?

It was me. I was missing. They left ME. Then the baby pulled my wool and squeezed my ears. I was happy there and so I stayed with the man, the lady and the adorable baby.

The Pain of Hope

As darkness overtakes my eyes. I hear a soothing and a light voice as if next to me whispering into my ears. As seconds go by a candle light can be seen through the darkness. More seconds pass by and now darkness covers my eyes again.

The sound of scraping wood can be heard throughout the room as if someone is dragging a plank around the classroom. As the scraping sounds continue, I hear a man grunting and moaning in pain and what seems a whip-like sound. Near the end the scraping sound stops and then I hear someone banging on wood as if nailing someone to it and yelling at them.

The narrator's voice begins to tremble in pain. The people around the room begin crying as if they feel His pain. Through the blindfold I see a shadow coming up to me and grabbing my hand gently. Then it pokes me with a needle.

The banging sounds stop, and after I feel the pain our savior felt: the pain of hope.

A Not-So-Average Whodunnit

He stole out of the building under the cover of night, the item that could end it all in his hand. Looking around the corner, he waited for the officer on his smoke break to turn around for what seemed like hours, and finally he dashed towards the ditch that he had spent countless nights digging until he could no longer reach with his shovel.

The box tumbled down the hole as he breathed a sigh of relief, snuck back to the corner, and joined the smoking officer.

The Nativity Scene Told by a Sheep

It was an ordinary day like any other, and the shepherds were herding us to a large pasture for us to eat in. As the night began to fall, a large, glowing star appeared in the sky. This star hadn't been here before, and as I watched the shepherds notice the star, they seemed confused, when, all of a sudden, a glowing person with wings (which I later learned was an angel), began to speak to the shepherds.

I didn't understand everything the angel had said, but then, the shepherds took us all into a pen and shut the gate. Since I'm the smallest sheep in my flock, I could easily crawl under the gate. I was curious to see where the shepherds were going and why they left in such a hurry. After walking for a long time, the shepherds stopped at a dusty stable, and when I looked up at the sky, I saw the glowing star directly above the stables.

For My Sister and Me

For my sister and me.

Once she was the greatest comfort.

A sister, with cute stickers and kind words,

Someone that let me join her in her happiest of days.

When we sat together in church, she would remind to pay attention.

We would play Barbies, making them fight and shop, sitting on our carpet.

No matter the fight, we would always eventually make up,

And I thought nothing would ever change that.

For my sister and I.

Soon she got older, a highschooler working in her room,

Correcting my grammar and looking on me as a child,

Which technically was true.

I proctored long math tests, quiet in a chair.

I idolized my sister and wrote weird songs about her.

I would ask her "Do you want to go to CVS?"

She would say, "Maybe later."

For my sister and me.

She said I wasted my summer, doing nothing productive,

And I yelled that she was being dumb,

and angrily played the piano on a much lower octave.

I never wanted to see her. I never wished to see her face.

Nebraska can have her, I thought. She's not the sister I knew.

Food science seemed her only care, and the drift between us grew.

She had a boyfriend, and when they broke up,

I had sympathy for him, not her.

Dear Jesus, please help us sisters now, in your name. Amen.

For Myself

This is for me.
I want to have no stress.
I want to be free of anxiety.
I pray everyday and prayer has helped,
But I wish I could be free of it entirely.

This is for me.
I want to be able to believe fully in my potential,
Like a butterfly before it's a butterfly,
Trapped in a cocoon,
But not long after, uses its wings to go out
And be able to fly away using its wings
And not have to worry and just be free.

This is for me,
For me to love myself,
For me to take care of myself,
To be more confident,
To be me.

Tunnel of Pain

I fell in a hole.
I was stuck with the opening shot behind me.
All I could see was pain.
Walking forward gave me scars,
But going backward only got me stuck.
As I continued I saw no light,
Just a dark tunnel to hurt me.
I saw a flower, but as soon as I grabbed it, it was dead.
I heard people laughing but could not get to them.
One step at a time, I saw a crack,
A sliver of light shone through
In all the dark from the past.
From where I looked, it was small,
But as I got closer, it grew.
My walking felt neverending,
Like I was going nowhere.
The laughter got louder, and more flowers grew.
That is when I knew the tunnel would never end,
But the more I walked, the closer I was to you.

First Communion

I was getting first communion
I was Happy
I want to invoke Joy,
White dressed.

This Joyous day,
Little girls all dressed in white,
Little boys in suits and ties.
The smiling faces of their parents,
Happiness all around me.

I enter in the church with pride,
My classmates with me in a line.
There I see with loving eyes
The Lord upon the cross.

The priest says the Mass and then
I see the Lord.
I finally get to eat the bread of life,
And I am blessed with sanctifying grace.

Thank you, Lord.
Thank you.

The Surprise

As I was in adoration on my middle school retreat,
I felt God calling me to go to confession.
I knew it was Him because I got up on my feet
And walked to the line like it was nothing and took a seat.

As I got closer to the door, I got more and more nervous,
But I looked at Jesus and knew it was going to be okay,
And when I walked in, the priest greeted me and said, "Let us pray."

When I finished confession, I went back into adoration and sat down.
Then, I looked at Jesus with my two only eyes,
And said, "Thank you for your time, it was a pleasant surprise."

The Power of Nether

“Why?” asked Tendril after a moment with the voice of a very sick man.

Kreail slapped Tendril to the ground and stared into his face grinning with mad triumph.

“Is it not clear?” Kreail demanded in his cool, polite voice. “I simply wanted your power, the very power of Nether himself!”

Tendril looked aghast at this betrayal, even as Kreail called the *cursemagic* spilling from Tendril to himself. As Kreail sucked the last of Tendril’s magic into himself, he looked at Tendril and said, “You will not believe how easy it was to do this to you. Really, your only friends were the people you thought were your foes. They tried to warn you, but you only pushed them away while you clung to me like a mewling child! I just had to keep you safe until the right moment, be your friend, and encourage you to follow your ‘destiny.’ As for destiny, you followed it blindly like a child, obliviously doing whatever it told you, no matter how much you suffered, simply because you thought you had no choice.”

“But...” moaned Tendril, who was now beginning to dissolve into purple mist.

“DO YOU NOT GET IT?” screamed Kreail hysterically, “You had a choice all along! But no, you allowed yourself to descend deeper into madness! You became just like Nether in the end – just like the person you hated! I enjoyed ruining you. Now it is time for my reign.”

Tendril’s eyes widened in shock as he realized it was true. Then he began to laugh. Not a joyful laugh, or a wicked one, but the despairing laugh of someone broken who realizes too late that they were ruined. And indeed it was too late.

Flash Before My Eyes

If I had been listening to Metallica at the time of the event, that line would surely have been burned in my brain. Rain was crashing down, thunder was rumbling, and my family and I were on a bike ride and away from home.

Just a few minutes ago, the sun had been shining warmly on us. No one suspected rain. We were returning home from a retro game store on our bikes.

Suddenly, after we had been heading back for a few minutes, it happened. Before long, the rain was too intense for the smaller children. My mom and most of my siblings had to duck into a ditch and get off their bikes to avoid a risk of lightning.

Myself, my dad, and one of my brothers, however, had to head home to get the car. With the clap of thunder and the rain crashing down, fear would be expected. However, we realized the importance of our “mission” and fearlessly plowed through the storm. We managed to return home, get the car, and pick everyone up.

Group 5

Lance Alonte

Natalie Benavidez

Nathaniel Clinton

Katie Dickinson

Christine Directo

Alessandra Esparza

Lauren Evans

Belen Garcia

Clare Hayes

Holy Holyszko

Maria Jesko

Adam Kelley

Gracen Marie Luke

Sebastian Manero

Maegan McCarthy

Mary Elizabeth McClane

Gabriel Moore

Khiem Nguyen

Catherine O'Connor

Alejandro Rodriguez

David Roman-Pavajeau

Antonio Sanchez

Elizabeth Tabaoda

Prinze Tamayo

Phillippe Tamayo

Stephane Zanovello

The Final

The absence of sufficient preparation gargled in my stomach as I stepped through the classroom door. In my fidgeting hands I received the test, and I found my seat on a tall, unsteady chair.

Once the teacher commenced the time of trial with his emotionless and monotonous voice, my eyes quickly traveled across the page. My fingers clenched tightly into my hand to form an uneasy fist, while my other hand scratched mindlessly on my once smooth pencil. The equations stole all of my focus as the world around blackened out. I uncomfortably sat staring at my future with the loud silence of other students attempting to distract me.

Time ran swiftly as I, with slow precision, pedantically examined each question. Other students began to exit with a sense of relief that I had little time to envy. My heavy head rested upon my hand as if it tried to absorb some necessary knowledge from my sweaty palm.

Five minutes remained. I scribbled my calculation illegibly and breathed deeply, knowing it'd soon be over. One minute. After I finished scrambling to check my answers I had decided that I had presented my best work and with a sigh of relief, I handed in the final test.

I thought this test only covered precalculus, but I guess the administration wants to check our sanity as well.

St. Michael

With tranquil heart and virtue in his hand,
With Justice reigning deep within his soul,
He to the wicked serpent did command
To flee in shame into his fiery hole.

Without a fear to deeply love our King,
And conscious of His warm and blazing care,
With loyal friends of spirit and the wing
Go trusting, loving, till with them, we'll share.

That blessed vision bright our home above
And fight with peace with Michael for our Lord
With sword of prayer and shield of steadfast love
And battle cry of His most sacred Word.

Defend, O Michael, raise to God our being
As children loving our eternal King.

Lance Alonte
Age 17

By the Seaside

Looking through the window toward the sea, he could see ships raise their sails, preparing for their ocean voyages. Many ships had left their ports under the watchful gaze of the presence behind the glass. The birds flew toward their nests, bracing for the approaching twilight.

The final gleam of sun glistened on the waves. Howling wind and the rising tide motioned toward another day. Every night for many years he had stared at this window, never finding the sight to become dull. The reasons he pondered for staying were sufficient in his mind, so he never left.

The candle he lit was not for his own vision. Rather, the flame he sparked was habitual. He was at peace in his shelter and found comfort in his undying candle.

Saving Grace

The sun no longer lights the world around us.
The ocean tries to swallow up the sky.
The stars have fallen down,
And they're burning on the ground.
They incinerate the soil on which I lie.

I've run so long through pits of acrid flames
From the man who stole the setting sun.
My time was nearly through;
Thank God that I found you.
With your strength a victory is won.

The memory of what my life once was
Is fading fast into the endless night.
Please tell me, my friend
Why does it have to end?
I can't be left behind in the dying light.

You see me emerging from the storm,
Lost and lonely traveler
From an island beyond the horizon.
You hear my cries of anguish.
You see tears fall from my eyes.
You're reaching out your hand for me
To lift me toward the skies.

Please lead me past the walls of rising smoke.
Guide me where my human eyes can't see
And grant me force of will
To march on further still,
To bring me to a place where I'll be free.

Flowers

Why do your petals droop and change color?
I have given you all that you need.
But you, like an ungrateful child, continue to die,
Despite all I have done for you.
I'll do more; your petals must stay pink.
Perhaps if I pluck you from amongst your siblings,
I could place you in a book
Or hang you on a wall by your dying stem.
I will preserve you, along with those before you—
Rows and rows of dried-up pink flowers,
Suspended above my head, too delicate to touch.

Fishing for Hope

I felt the calluses on my hands as I pulled up the once again empty net. Once again, I wanted to give up. I sat in the boat and rested my head in my hands. I smelled of sweat and lake water; I would have welcomed the stench of fish. The water continuously slapped the side of my wooden boat in an inconsistent rhythm, like a confused song. I couldn't go home empty handed, but what was I to do? The fish had abandoned me just as my God had abandoned me. Where was God when my family and I were starving? I threw the net back into the water.

There was commotion in one of the other boats. I heard a shout. I looked over to see Peter in his boat, on his knees, and his boat sinking. He was going to lose his boat! I pulled out my once again empty net and began to make my way to him, but then I noticed another man in the boat. I realized why his boat was sinking: it was overflowing with fish. How had he done that? I moved my boat closer to see better. The man was talking to Peter, and I leaned in to hear his words.

“From now on, you will be fishers of men.”

The Red Forgotten Bench

It's paint, rusted and red
Worn out and repainted
Sat on and soon forgotten
Under the pollen tree.
A bench for two,
Unsteady under the uneven floor.

Rejection

Zion woke up with a pounding headache and blurry vision. He felt around for his glasses but couldn't find them. He could smell the faint buttered popcorn and he felt himself shiver. He could feel the AC above blast air on his face and on his skin. He tried to replay in his head what had happened the night before, but he came to a stop when he remembered a face. A beautiful face, but he couldn't put a name to it. He started to remember different parts of the night, like buying a chocolate bar and tripping in the dark. Then, it came to him. He had fallen out of his seat and the beautiful face helped him up. His instinct was to try and get her number, but she turned him down quick and punched him in the face.

The end.

His Place of Space

Chris said he needed his space as he continued to clench his fists harder. He went to his escape. He felt the need to be connected to the earth and let go of all emotions to just think. He took off his sandals and the grains of crushed rocks moved quickly and softly under his feet, making way to mark every step he made.

A slight mist covered his body that made him crusty. With every inhale he took, a strong scent of salt filled his nose. His pushed, quick breaths became less tense, along with his eyebrows that unfurrowed. His mind was less decluttered with every breath and step he took. The sun went down and created new bursts of color in the sky. Seagulls were slightly pushed and directed back to their homes before the night light had set. Chris let his eyelids shut.

Long, unhuman sounds of echolocation burst into the air – the few last bird calls, the blowing of waves. So much was going on, yet in the most peaceful way, Chris finally had time to think. In less than an hour, he knew what he had to do. He left his place of space and continued his quest.

A Great Load of Fish

It was a cold morning and fog covered the lake. I shivered as a crowd formed around Jesus. They were requesting to hear the word of God. Without hesitating, Jesus boarded the nearest boat he could see. At every step He made, the rusty boat creaked and swayed. The wind began to glide through his long beard. He grasped the sail as he sat down and started to teach. When he had finished, He commanded Simon to “let down your nets for a catch” even though they had caught nothing for days. Simon dutifully picked up the prickly net in his hands. To everyone’s astonishment an enormous amount of fish arose from the net. The fish flapped their fins trying to be let loose. Simon immediately fell on his knees, begging, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.” I was astonished as well as the rest of the crowd.

The Land Unknown

There is a land unknown to humankind
Far from the busy streets of lands abroad.
It lies there in sweet solitude of mind,
A place where peace and love would fill the air.

The predator would lie down with the prey,
Flowers would blossom and the grass was fresh
But who could have disturbed the peace that lay?
What wicked being would do so much wrong?

The answer to this question lies within
It has been passed down centuries to us.
We’re all drawn to this tendency of sin,
We fight it everyday to strengthen faith.

Tiger Statue

Big, but small place
With an open area
Shaped like a square.

Big walls, two story with lots of trees.
Big trees, small trees, bushes and leaves,
All inside this big area.

Windows looking towards the space,
Big as it can be.
Nature loves this place.

Oh, to be there, in the open area,
Or to be the area
With a mighty statue to a side
Shaped like a large being,
Four feet, long tail, sharp teeth, and ears,
Standing in a glorious pose.

The mighty spirit of a feline,
Strong as it can be.
Colors used to be bright, but now they're dull.
The old statue is going old,
It still resists with every day and every year.

The mighty still lives with spirit and hope,
Will never stop,
Each year a new start.

The statue on a big rock,
Strong as to say how much more
Each stripe equal to each generation
That has passed by . . .

The fierce and mighty tiger statue.

His Grace Runs Deeper

When will I learn to follow you?
When will I start to keep your word?
I try and fail in every hour,
And then I have to try once more.
When will your mercy ever stop?
When will you choose to not forgive?
Your mercies wash away my sins,
My sins that cry to You to live.
When will you tire of my flaws?
When will your patience run its course?
Your love will never end, my God.
By gifts of grace, my spirit soars.

The Glory of Creation

My God who created earth's cloak, sands, and sea,
He who created the globe's motioning waters
That sway and splash to profess His glory,
My God who raised the grand stone and grass mountains, towers
That continually stand in wonder and awe at their Creator,
He who created the vivid, soaring skies
That vibrantly radiate His majesty,
My God who created earth's crawling and obedient creatures
That breathe, sing, and rejoice in their generous Father.
My God who created little me,
He who placed me in His vast universe
That now lives, speaks, and writes to proclaim His wondrous glory gratefully.

Pencil

An amber wooden stick
Now held within my grasp
Is now an outlet for
My thoughts from mind to sheet
Handle of lead that scrapes for me
Dances across the lines
The silent words in my mind
No one before could see.

To Christ Crucified

How can you not cry out against the nails?
How can you love the cross that gives you death?
How can you only shiver in the gales?
Unmoving, waiting for your final breath.

Why love me after all I've done to you?
Why stay here and not call the angel host?
Why give your life when I have been untrue?
Unmoving, waiting, you, who love most.

What way can I alleviate your pain?
What prayer to say to bring my sins to light?
What water can my bloody hands unstain?
Unmoving, waiting for the end of night.

Yet through your pain, you die to set me free
And give my life in recompense to thee.

A Leaf

Curved to points,
Sharp and strong,
Green-gold hues dance across the surface.
It possesses the sweet perfection
No painter can hope to match.
The edges, however,
Have begun to surrender
To the orange-red fire
Of the Autumn theme.
A crunch of crumbling leaves.
Bits rustling in the wind.
One leaf shows the battle
That summer's time is past.

The Flag of Pan-Arabia

Above the rolling waves of sand,
Above the mud-brick walls.
Above the winding river of blue,
Above the fertile plain.
Upon a pole of silver steel,
Shimmering in the midday sun,
Waves the flag of a great nation,
In majesty and awe.
The flag of the great nation,
Four colors to behold.
Red is for the blood they shed,
And green is for the fields.
Black is for the industry,
And white is for the peace anew.

The Valley

Across a mountain valley,
Across a mountain plan,
A single oak doth stand there
Bending under its weight.

Over in the distance,
Tall mountains stand in line
Topped with a white powder
Colder than the depths of hell.
The sun doth shineth
Its sunset gold red hue
Sets the barren rock ablaze
And turns the white powder blue.

Mr. Lazybones

There, in the house o'er the hill
Lies an animal
With fur like snow,
His eyes
Pools of gold
Flecked with green.
He lay there on a white seat
Like an angel on a cloud.
He will not move from this throne
Unless given the *patéed* fish delicacy.
He finishes
And retreats back to his seat.
Thus is the life of the cat.

Through the Thick of It

The air is thick with sand. I feel each individual grain stings my face. Beads of sweat slide down my face as I trudge through the arid desert. I'm parched. My companions and I only planned on being out here for two days, but it's day four. Rationing water can only go so far. There was supposed to be a village east of where our ship crashed. I saw it coming down, yet we've seen nothing. Nothing but dunes for miles.

Heat exhaustion set in days ago. We can't go any farther without water. I'm sunburnt. I have sand everywhere. I'm about to give up. Then, our thing barks. No, I don't know what it is; I know it barks, though. And it did. It ran ahead and waited for us to follow. We ran as fast as the sand would let us.

There, over the dune was a camp. The camp was full of tents as tall as the men there. The canvas tents were loose enough to pack up and take along. They also had some animals that I'm guessing held their stuff while they moved.

"Horses," my companion laughed. "They have horses! We're saved!" She started down the hill.

"What's a horse?" I yelled back at her. She paused then walked back muttering something.

Peaks

They rise above me, towering things of stone and snow, lit by the midday sun. Below me, the gravel of the trail falls from my then-small shoes, skittering across the ground as I climb atop a turtle-shaped boulder to get a better view. Around me are the sounds and smells of the forest. I hear the chirping of the birds, the buzzing of the bugs, and the woody smell of the old-growth, ever-growing, evergreen pines.

But I am single minded, only looking to look at these majestic mountains. Compared to them, I am as the ant that I unknowingly crush beneath my sneakers. I avert my eyes almost reverently, and turn to gaze at the glistening lake, marveling at its azure waters, and wonder how the waves got there.

Did the mountains stir and thus disturb the cavernous pool, like a child exiting the bathtub? These are Peaks, and the idea of myself lies, contentedly crushed below.

Intruder

The alarm slowed, then stopped as *Jacqueline's* emergency sirens subsided. Cousteau breathed a sigh of relief. The oxygen system was fine. But how had it broken? The submersible, while not quite new, had never before been problematic. He walked back to the bridge slowly, double and triple checking everything, and found nothing out of place.

Cousteau clambered back into the submariners seat and gasped in horror. Someone had manually turned the oxygen off. The *Jacqueline* was a one-man craft. Cousteau was alone . . . unless?

The thought made him shudder.

He tried to slow his breathing, but Cousteau kept hearing an incomprehensible sort of squelch, till he turned his head back, and it would stop. Cousteau steeled himself. He forced his head to look forward, as the noise became piercing. Then a bang, then Cousteau's eyes rolled to the back of his head, then all was black.

Eyes to See

I saw. I saw everything. I saw how the heavens clashed as His voice carried over the people. As His breath filled the air and entered into everything surrounding Him. How the people were fickle, looking for a magic man, a charlatan, and finding one with the eyes they had. There were people. Spirits. Transformed by Grace yet. They knew him indefinitely. Their souls filled, yearned, hungered, poured out in bleeding gratitude. His blood filled their hearts already. No, I did not see with a man's gaze. I saw with the mind of a Holy Vision how my Master fulfilled His promises. I was filled beyond knowing and understanding. No one saw me but those in Him and Him Himself. How masterful His craft is. As the fish swam to greet Him, to bade Him welcome and rejoice in His commands. As hearts turned colder still, denying their very souls the precious privilege of humility. Rest. Peace. Love. He moved on from them. On to His patient promises.

Excerpt from "Killing Time"

RJ: You have to let me leave! I gave my word already - and as much as I love it here, as weird and different as it is from where I'm from with your "philanthropies" and "deadly knowledge -"

IO: Philosophies. Philanthropy is providing services for free although it's usually through financial means. It's charity, really. I assume this new interest in money means you've changed your mind on granting me your inefficient currency.

RJ: First of all, that's what I said. Second of all, it's not inefficient, inflation just happens sometimes. But that's what I mean. You're smart. All of you - genius even. But for a people who talk an awful lot about the "intellectual experience," you have very little of it.

IO: Of experience? If you would've cared to notice the tome I hit you with, you would've read "600 Years of the Mastery of the Mind" on the cover. Your experience ends at second rate understanding of basic algorithms.

RJ: Your book landed me in jail - quite literally to be exact.

IO: Your mouth landed you in jail. Perhaps if you didn't yell at high ranking officers you wouldn't be here.

RJ: Okay, well, whatever. That's not even the point. The point is, I have my very own Philanthroper's Plague to inform my superiors of and by keeping me here, you not only endanger me and my people, but your own.

IO: Notice how you said yourself first? I very much doubt whatever you could possibly know is of such grave and existential concern. And another thing, don't take Philosopher's Plague lightly like it's taboo. It does kill people.

RJ: People kill people. And DON'T HIT ME AGAIN. Don't hit me. Hasn't anyone told you not to hit a man down?

IO: Words like that are what landed you here in the first place. And I won't. Just stop being stupid, please. If I watch you try to pick that lock any longer, I'll die from being a witness to your idiocy.

Meagan McCarthy
Age 17

New England Graves

The dappled sun fell in watery patches of pastel yellow upon the clipped grass.

An iced wind tossed the bared branches overhead. I looked at my feet.

A bronzed metal slab lay in the earth, shrouded over by trailing brush. My eyes traced my grandfather's name engraved upon its worn surface. I felt then the sorrow of forgotten days. I raised my face, and gazed out over the hill covered in arched stones. Here lay ghosts of unremembered lives. Two words formed on my lips. *Requiem in pace.*

Under the Cross

It is black, under the deadwood cross
Where a woman cries,
A tender mother, pained in loss.
There is red upon the wooden beams,
Where nail pierced flesh,
The flesh that bled those crimson streams.
The sorrow in her virgin's eye,
Where tears swim high,
Is joined by not a single sigh.
Where silently she weeps alone,
Her son has died,
And now he lies in solid stone.
Her hand upon his crown is laid,
A crown of thorns.
To toil and pain it had been made.
They mercilessly killed her son
To silence him.
And now under the deadwood cross,
Bent in misery,
She stays to mourn her sacred loss,
The Lady of Soludad.

Mary McClane
Age 17

Five Loaves and Two Fish

In the desert ends our King saves,
Lifting the baskets to review
The immense miracle
Of the five loaves and two fish.

With grace and power, our Savior's hand
Multiplied the food as grains of sand,
And hunger vanished before their eyes.

In giving our all, with love sincere
The smallest acts can bring blessings near.

A Labyrinth of Silence

Hidden amongst the valley of grass
Holds a flat plain of stone that inscribes a labyrinth.
This labyrinth imprisons an unfortold beast.
This is no beast that the human eye may lay upon.
This is no beast that the human voice may call upon.
This is no beast that the human touch may feel upon.
However,
The only sensory of the human that is viable
Is the sense of sound or lack of it . . .

from That Vintage Snap

The time I come to consciousness. This is a moment in my life that I would look back upon and realize a lot of my physical and mental issues that have played throughout my life. I was at the age of three, my sister, mom, and dad had been living at my grandma's house. All four of us slept in one bedroom with a king size bed and a small box TV.

How the memory appears to me is that vintage "snap" of consciousness into reality. It was very dark in the bedroom. My parents and sister had fallen asleep perpendicular to the bed and I was the only person awake at the time. On the box TV, *Night at the Museum 2* had been played on a loop, and I distinctly remember watching the movie over and over again and seeing the digital alarm clock count from 2:00 A.M. to 6:30 A.M.

I remember staying up until it was 6:30 A.M. and then laying down and going to sleep. As a three year old, I should have been sleeping by then, and this would plague my health along the way, later being diagnosed with sleep apnea, insomnia, and melatonin deficiency.

In the Land of the Three-Horned Bear

In the land of the three-horned bear,
the trees all grow from stars in the sky,
stretching down down down from outer space,
roots twisting high away into the darkness,
with bark made of light,
smooth and white and soft,
down down down they grow,
stretching like fingers reaching out to touch the earth,
with narrow branches and leaves of pale grey
bunched together on the ends like a family,
dangling over our heads,
hovering above like clouds,
trembling in the wind as fish pass by quietly,
the fish that float by in the night—
their bodies that swim through air look like eyes always watching,
large and round and black like pools of glass looking out
unblinking as they swim by.
If you take a camera into your dreams,
you can watch them when you wake.
Everything is glowing,
everything shines,
a child's dream come true,
vines of lace that hang from the sky,
and ghostly elephants forever roaming.
No sun is needed when the moon is bright enough,
and smiles and dreams will light your way,
and in the darkness of forever night the moonlight is always singing,
a song a thousand years of blue and white,
in the land of the three-horned bear.

Omnipresent

You might as well speak to me from the cross,
Because what is it you want from me?
Why do you follow me but hide in plain sight like air?
Can't you see the despair you cast onto me when I can't see you or anyone else?
Because of this point, my mind's playing a fake game of "hide and seek."
And I just need something tangible to grasp. . .
Your cross is nice,
But I need to be defended from the vices I entice,
My weaknesses,
My desperation...
TO SIMPLY FIND YOU.
Do you ever feel remorse as I have nothing to selflessly adore?
You can read my mind's thoughts galore,
So why do you observe me in silence?
You've watched me take the hit from the world,
And nothing . . .
I need something,
Anything . . .
I need to feel you,
I need to find you,
I need to see you.
That way, I can confidently say you are out there,
Somewhere . . .
But for now,
I respect that you're present to me in what stands before me:
The cross I see.

Extra Time

“BOOM!” roared Ned at his opponent. He was playing FIFA against another player online and had just scored an incredible free kick to win the game.

“Hey!” called his brother to Ned in the game room. “Keep it down! So annoying,” chastised Greg, his brother. Ned bit his tongue to refrain from insulting his brother and scowled at the floor. Rising to turn off the TV, he pressed its OFF button forcefully and proceeded to storm to his room. Noticing that he might have been rude to his sibling, Greg tried to intercept Ned in order to apologize.

“Wait a sec, dude. Listen, I’m sorry for making you upset, but you can’t scream like that every time you play video games – which is a lot.”

“Okay, bro,” mumbled Ned through clenched teeth. He pushed past his brother and went to his room. Shutting the door slowly, he turned and pressed his back to it, releasing a soft exhale. His room was quite organized. His bed was neatly done, his books were all organized in his bookcase, and there were no clothes on the floor.

“Perfectly organized,” thought Ned as he walked to his desk to get a stick of gum. His eyes lit up on the crisp blue pack of Extra. Opening the Extra pack, Ned was greeted by a horrid sight: there were only three sticks of gum left.

“What the heck?” groaned Ned. He stormed out of the room to search for his brother, but he had disappeared. Seeing as Greg was nowhere to be found, Ned went to Greg’s room to search for his missing sticks of gum. Furious and severely perturbed, he tore through his brother’s things, destroying the order which had once existed in Greg’s room. However, for all the searching he did, not a single piece of gum was found. Defeated, Ned began to exit the bedroom, prepared to forget the theft altogether. That would’ve been the case had Ned’s eyes not landed on a shining, silver object next to the door. He crouched down to inspect the clue and noticed it was a scrunched-up wrapper, the wrapper of his gum. His suspicions were confirmed. His brother was now a suspect, which meant his gum was in danger. Ned ran out of the room, speeding his way downstairs in a wild manner. “Mom!” he called.

“Yes, dear?”

“Where’d Greg go?!”

“He just left. Why? What’s wrong?”

Ned clenched his teeth and fists. He had just missed Greg. He had lost his beloved gum and couldn’t stop thinking, “If only I had extra time.”

David Roman-Pavajeu
Age 16

Suspended

My eyes open, squinting due to the blinding light shining through the tree. I found myself lying there, suspended in the air by some type of weathered old hammock. The rough surface of the fabric piercing my back, I lay there swaying back and forth as the slight breeze hits my face, sweat dripping down my forehead as if I've been there hours.

Motherly Love

Precious blue like the ocean.
Precious metal like a sword.
Ring of stars upon your veil, draped in your beautiful mantle.
Arms spun open ready to embrace your beloved children.
Motherly love like no other, showing us in your grace.
Such a Miraculous image, Mother of God, Mary most holy.
Around my neck she stays, in my prayers she remains.

That's What I Thought

ME: Okay! You've been on the Xbox long enough. It's my turn.

MY BROTHER: No, bro, I'm still playing! GET OUT!

ME: I'm not going anywhere. Mom said it's my turn.

MY BROTHER: No, she didn't. You're lying. 20 more minutes

ME: 20 MORE MINUTES?! That's way too long. Give me the controller!

MY BROTHER: No, I'm not giving it to you. YOU didn't give it to me yesterday. You can see it in a little bit.

ME: I'm going to tell Dad if you don't give it to me. And, I'm also not paying for your lunch tomorrow!

MY BROTHER: *Bruuuuh*, that's not fair. Five more minutes.

ME: More like five more seconds. Five, four, three, . . .

MY BROTHER: FINE. Here, take the controller. Gosh!

ME: That's what I thought.

Adoring He

Her eyes traveled across the church
In awe they watched dancing
The sweet joy of angels!
The beauty of a Eucharist framed with gold.

She sat on the far left of the pew number 40,
Where it was quiet,
But angelic chants echoed in her head;
The voices sung to her spirit.

She held the wooden rosary
In her clammy hands,
Gazing at the jewel blue altar
Adoring its beautiful ways,
And though outside it was dark,
Inside there was bright light.

Eucharist at the Altar

Although He seems vulnerable
In His protection of golden refinement,
He is power, light,
Bigger than a lion.

And as you hear the chants,
The sweet joy of angels,
Your heart flutters,
It dances within.
Your eyes travel across the church.
In awe they watch Him
Illuminating within.
His glory is bright,
His majesty is big with might,
Yet, His tenderness is gentle on the soul.

Michelangelo and the Model

One work carries more grandeur than the cars,
And with our phones, the oils and paints are never far.
Thirteen men stand together, friendship uniting them in feast.
The Center man who stands up for the least.

In holy studies, my teacher says,
“This artwork has a story.”
So, dressed up I stand, with paper in hand
To retell this story in glory.

A work spanning cycles of seasons in labor
Ending with two faces of the betrayer.
Bled to the right, he stands with sullen face.
Excluded from this overwhelming grace.

Blues aside. Mike asks his Judas, “Why?”
“Why all the tears?”
“Why take my precious work for nigh?”

“It’s as I fear, I’ll need some beer.
You’ve forgotten my grace as grand as His good face.
Me! The reference used to put Him in His place!”

Impudent myths? I solemnly jest.
God made us in His image.
So when my art knowledge is put to the test,
I’ll recommend the tale of this image.

Seething Snow

You fail to see me with irked expression.
And as the snow, I can never speak confessions.

Seething and loathing, I feel this when
You hide in your stones.

Seething, I feel when you forsake me
For fires and phones.

Seething anger, my tears turn to pounding ice.
Seeing how I was never all that nice.
Seeing you with chocolate in your hand.
Seething renewed, my blizzard runs through the land.

Philippe Tamayo
Age 17

Windows

That clear frame,
Spotless magnifiers of creation,
Seeing the ever-present world that passes by,
Born by hands that know their craft,
Made to separate man from nature's hand,
Firm to walls that bound its duty
To the glowing eyes that view
Life moving on while they sit in a crowded classroom bloom.

Untrodden Grounds

In the bandcamp of my junior year, I watch all the flutes form a crown focused on learning pieces for the new school year. However, one flute player, less advanced than the rest, struggled, each rhythm, each fingering, each octave a step into new territory, untrodden grounds.

She (the flutist) was a fish in the open, unaware of the net closing around her. Such is the life of a freshman. But then I remembered. I too was a freshman; I know what it feels like to be thrust into the deep end and abandoned, left alone to fend for yourself in a cruel world. And looking over, I did not want to repeat the mistakes of the past; I did not want her to experience the immense storm awaiting her sail's current trajectory. There is a pain in your eyes, a broken stature, deep feelings of insecurity.

So, from that moment forward, I made a secret promise to myself to help her until she became relative in skill to everyone else. I know I wasn't the best individual to teach, but I knew I would do something to help. Each small bird learns to fly on its own from the ones who highlight the path and lead the way.

The Lawnmower

Its cutting blades go round in circles,
A blade like a deadly iron sword.
An inch above the ground it cuts,
The green trail behind its path
Dripping out of its motor,
Remnants of grass blood.

Awoke by the stir of its motor
Through the green fields,
Wavers the deadly shadow.
A blade flashes through its reflection.
The salute is outlined with the scream of weeds.

Outstretched in the quiet field
The horror monster strikes,
But when winter comes
The horror monster sleeps.

The Cat

It was an ordinary Thursday. I was sitting in front of my computer when I heard an unmistakable, piercing yell coming from my doorway. This could only mean one thing: a) my Mom was napping, b) The cat had come to me because she wanted something.

I ignored her. Whatever she wanted, she could wait until my mom woke up. A couple minutes passed, and the cat began to rub herself against my leg. Her luscious, white fur and calico-black and orange spots stroked against my bare leg. I sighed, got out of my chair, and relented. I got on the floor and began to rub her belly. She purred in the same way when she eats or when she sleeps.

Time flew as we lay on the floor. None of us knew how much time passed, and plus, she had my undivided attention. Eventually, she remembered what she had come to irritate me about. She got up and hopped up by my window. She yelled. Afraid that her piercing shriek would shake the house and wake up my mom, I relented once again.

I opened my window, and Lucy, the cat, began to purr once again. I sighed in relief. I had, by some miracle, not woken up my mom.

Stephane Zanovello
Age 17