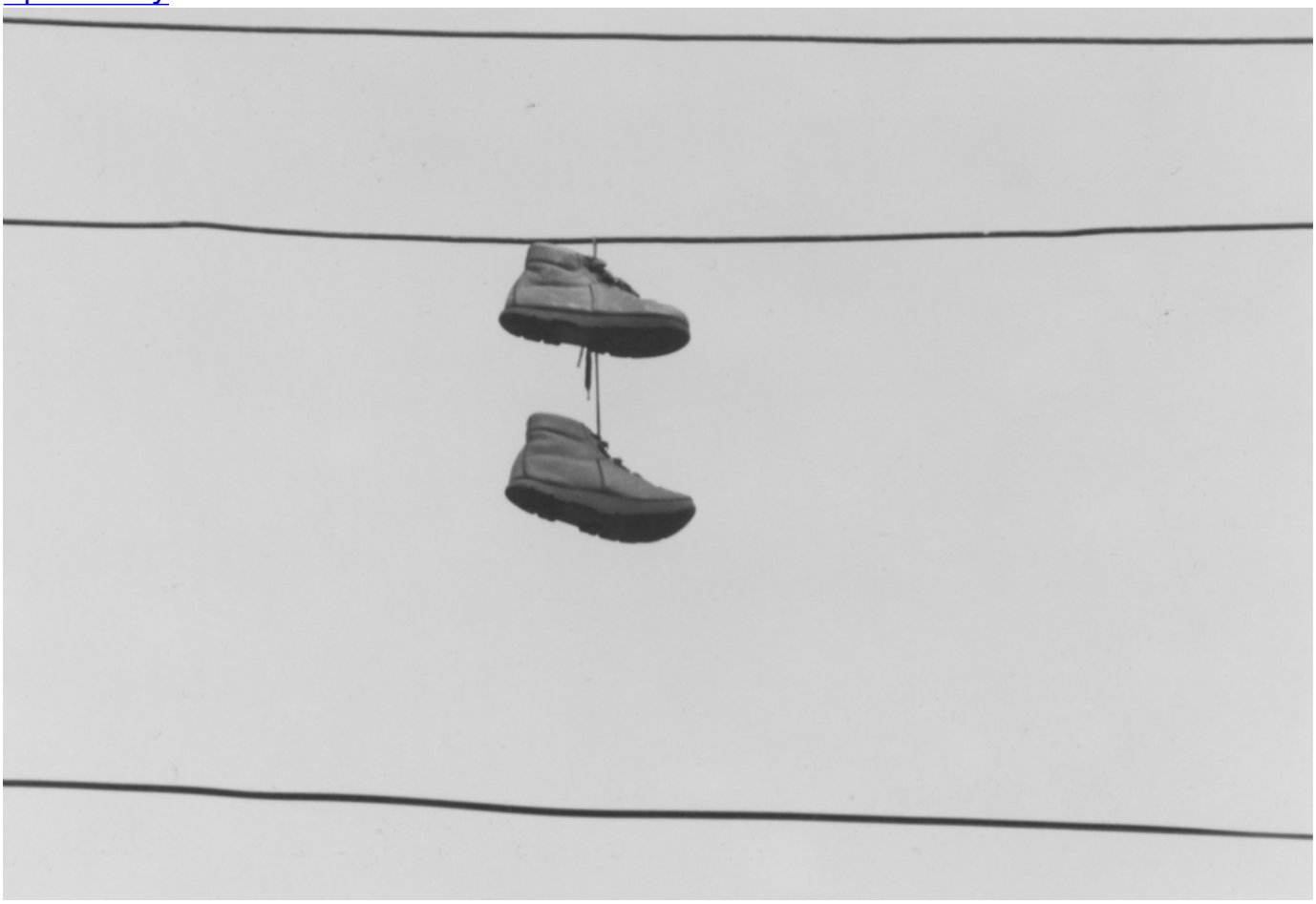
Columns
Spirituality



(Joan Sauro)



by Joan Sauro

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Report No. 1: The Meeting

We were a gathering of older religious women sitting in a large circle in a barren church hall. A hard journey we had of it, traveling long distances to listen to each other. There was coffee and two small packages of store-bought cookies, not enough for each to take one. The meeting began with five minutes of silent communing with the Divine.

One usually bright-faced sister walked to the microphone and said simply that she was currently living in a black box. There was palpable silence. We remembered how not too long ago she had laid her best friend in a box.

Another sister limped to the microphone to say she lived alone now and missed praying together.

One of the women who was a nonvowed member observed that the vowed members did not seem to know where they were going, so what hope did that leave for nonvowed members?

It was midafternoon bleak, and we had had a hard time coming of it. There was little wisdom in the air, more like a quiet sadness with no clear path to the future. Since this was the case, one online whiz reported that the Earth was going to self-destruct in 12 years, so why get all bent out of shape today?

This caused quite a few eyes to pop open. We had not heard this report. Now, what?

A quiet voice came forward with an insight, from a poet, no less.

It was Jane Kenyon, "Notes from the Other Side."

Let evening come. God is mercy clothed in light.

Some of us asked for a repeat. We wrote the words down. Said them quietly, over and over. *God is mercy clothed in light. God is mercy. Clothed in light.*

Slowly, one by one, we got up, crossed the room, and went out the door. There, in one magnificent heave, we flung our earthen shoes as high as we could into the light.

Report No. 2: The Tennis Game



St. Joseph Sr. Rose Regina Smith (Joan Sauro)

We had just finished an extraordinary game of tennis. Not the kind where you slam the ball in the corner, so the other cannot return it. But where you hit the ball so that she can. Easy strokes lobbed over the net and bounced near the other's racket, who lobbed the ball back over the net close to yours. Thus the game went on with gentle strokes and easy loops under a bright sunny sky.

Our joy continued on a nearby hill. She laughed and laughed over nothing, maybe the ridiculous tennis game, maybe the sun, the lazy clouds, the carefree day.

I was queen of the courts with shelves of trophies. She was queen of hearts. No coy Mona Lisa smile here. She let rip roar her joy down the hill, across the lake, and over the years so that I hear it still.

Why buff trophies of our achievements? Better to ride the wild winds of laughter.

Report No. 3: The Boat



(Joan Sauro)

The Pharisees nagged and nagged. "Give us a sign!"

Jesus sighed from the depths of his spirit (which is putting it mildly) and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? No sign will be given you."

Then he got into a boat and went off to the other shore (Mark 8:11-13).

Our family was on a rare vacation in a woodsy cabin on the edge of a lake with a boat afloat just for us. There were oars on shore and we found them.

It was, of course, slim vacation for our mother, who had meals to prepare and rooms to tidy. We nagged and nagged, until finally she said, "Take your boat and get the [blank] out of here!"

Now, many people have nuggets of maternal wisdom to hold close. You hear their wisdom told at family reunions, weddings and wakes.

There is no nugget here. Just two stories and a boat, trusting you'll know what to do with them.

Report No. 4: Ordinary Things



(Joan Sauro)

One day, Christ led a blind man away from the busy village and out to the fringe. When they were alone, Christ spit on his fingers, touched the blind eyes, and asked,

"Do you see anything?"

The blind man said, "I see people looking like walking trees." This required a second application of spit. Now the blind man saw perfectly (Mark 8:22-26).

We're not talking a fancy ophthalmic solution. We're talking spit.

Love transforms the most ordinary things. A multiplication of bread for the hungry. A little spit for the blind. Water turned into wine for the feast. The best saved until last.

[Joan Sauro, a Sister of St. Joseph of Carondelet, publishes widely in the Catholic press. "We were called Sister" (U.S. Catholic) was awarded first place for Best Essay 2014 by the CPA.]

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