POETRY OF JUAN ARTURO MADERO BLANCO

I

WORLD CONVERSION/CONVERSIÓN MUNDIAL

We have to begin the world all over again,
   The way we administer the world –
   We have to start it over....

Next time we can learn from the old mistakes.
   It will be different.
   It has to be different.

Next time we have to remember something important:
   “In the beginning was the Word.”
   In every beginning is the Word.

We forgot that; we kept forgetting it.
   We didn’t remember what it meant, that Word.
   We forgot what it means – what He means – what He meant to do with the world....

His world – the world He designed in the beginning,
   The world He made –
   And we unmade. (We distorted it beyond recognition.)

We failed to make it His way.
   We did “our thing” – not what He meant us to do in it,
   What He meant us to do with it, how we were to administer it.

We have to start over
   And do it right...
   Next time.

Juan Arturo Madero Blanco
Abril de 2003
Papa was so glad to have a boy among all those girls.
(He loved them just as well, of course—he called them his “four queens”)
But the boy was something special.
You remember that old family photo of the little fellow in a baseball cap,
trying to catch something those big hands would throw.
(Sometimes you also felt one of those big hands someplace else,
when you were mean to your sisters.)
At first he was disappointed when you, his only son, turned out to be
a book man instead of a ball man like he had been.
But he got used to the idea bye and bye—well, maybe not “used to it,”
but he was a big man inside, too,
and so he knew how to let be what comes to be.

You still remember so well the look on his face, says the Lord, that July night,
that terrible night after the wall fell (it was such a wet July,
and that wall was so old—a century—even if it was a foot thick).
You still remember so deep inside of you that look on his face—
not anger, or frustration, or any of the natural expressions
you would expect to see on a man’s face when
the wall of his house falls like that,
all at once and with no warning.
You were surprised; even I was a bit taken aback, says the Lord,
by that look of resignation, almost of acceptance,
as if it had to be, as if it was meant to be.
he always knew how to let be what comes to be.

And what a smile it brought to his face when the neighbors showed up
with shovels and wheelbarrows; they came to lend a hand,
to help clean up and to shore up—
not just the other walls, but his hope, and your hope,
and the hope of all the family.
The women brought food, too, a fine meal that night, and the next night;
what a feast you all had, and how much laughing there was,
even if you could see right out into the yard
(untill the big plastic curtain went up).
how much laughing and smiling there was, and yes, of course,
how much “Bud.”
I was even laughing myself, says the Lord, laughing with him and with you, although you might not have seen Me—just then.

But he did.

He saw me smiling (from that big picture of My Heart; it was on the wall, and not even the glass cracked, says the Lord).

He remembered My promise; he knew that I always keep My word.

I was smiling too at that silly old wall, but even more at his composure, even serenity,

knowing he had such good friends and neighbors,

and such a good family,

and all the support he needed from Me.

He knew all that so well.

Nothing to worry about—it would all get fixed bye and bye,

and even paid for—somehow, and the three new rooms would make it even better than before.

Nothing to worry about; why worry with such friends, and such a Friend, but you did worry, and you kept on worrying—for quite a while, for too long, I think, says the Lord, because you didn’t know how to trust Me yet, the way he did, you hadn’t learned that yet, and it’s the most important lesson of all: to let be what comes to be.

When it came to singing, he had a high, whiney voice, sort of nasal.

You heard it there in the choir loft of a Sunday morning—it was always second Mass—and at the Wednesday night devotions.

and then in Lent, on Fridays, too, at the Stations of the Cross—how much he loved that prayer, “I love thee, Jesus, my Love.... Grant that I may love thee always, and then do with me what thou wilt.”

What thou wilt...

You remember all that so well, says the Lord, because he always brought you with him, so you could sing a little, too.

You didn’t mind being up there with him, you didn’t mind at all.

You even liked being there—sometimes—because even as a young boy you knew it was all for Me.

And as you grew up and got a little more confident about singing—a little more, perhaps—you started to look at Me more and more, there on the altar, and at My Mother up higher in that round window. (How much he loved her and trusted in her!)

When your voice started to crack a little and went down a notch or two, he knew all about that, and it made him smile a little, because he remembered how that was, and why it had to be, and how you have to let be what comes to be.
That trust of his, that deep trust—in Me and in her!
   You know where he got it, or rather, says the Lord,
   you started to know when you were able to “put two and two together.”
   One thing was the choir loft, but there was also that face,
   that look of trust and gratitude,
   during the family prayers after supper, around that supper table,
   that old table in the kitchen, with the high chair at one corner.
That same table is where you did your homework,
   and where you saw him work out the accounts with your mother
   when things were so tight—they were always tight.
   There was never enough to pay them all, so each one got some,
   month by month, and that had to do.
But his trust overcame all that—even if he had to take an extra job
   that kept him out late some evenings,
   because it had to be that way.
You still remember that one night when he came back so late,
   looking especially tired, even more worn out than usual,
   but he needed to be out with the men on the levee across the river.
   There were some terrible floods on the river,
   especially for the people in the flatland by the river,
   and this was one of them.
He couldn’t rest without going to help out—it was his job, you know—
   when they called him at night:
   to help as he had been helped.
He knew that was My way, says the Lord,
   so he went right away because he knew it had to be that way,
   and he knew so well how to let be what comes to be.

But more often there were those other nights,
   those many other peaceful nights,
   especially the ones when his big hands were called upon
   to ease a belly ache or “growing pains” in your legs.
On an ordinary night,
   when you were getting ready for bed, all the lessons finished,
   you used to come down to the bathroom, the only one in the house,
   and through the door you would see him kneeling by the bed,
   that bed where your life began not that long before,
   but thinking a little—putting two and two together.
Bye and bye you learned to trust Me, too, a little more than before,
   but not nearly as much as he did, says the Lord.
When you went back upstairs, you knelt too, and said your prayers,
   those boyhood prayers, innocent prayers:
   “O Angel of God, my guardian dear....”
He was there because he had to be, and you with him,
   and so it still is...
All those scenes from long ago, still fresh,
as fresh as life,
after all these years, says the Lord,
those great scenes from something much better than a movie,
when you started learning—from him—
to let Me be who I am;
to let Me do what I do,
and how to let be what comes to be because it comes from Me!
Those special scenes, were the most important classes you ever had,
in your life-long education
(that was real “home schooling,” the best schooling),
and it goes on still because you can still remember it.
All those other lessons come crowding in, too—
how to stoke that old coal-burning furnace,
so it wouldn’t go out in the night;
how to use those little tools he loved so much,
so much better than ever you did.
how to use a jigsaw to make a maple leaf out of plywood,
and why it was necessary to clean the paintbrush,
and to clean it good,
and to put each tool back where it belonged
just because it belonged there.
And how to skin a fish, or a rabbit (you weren’t much of a fisherman,
and even less of a hunter)—
but there would come a time
for some real “fishing” and “hunting”
(I knew all about that even then, says the Lord,
long before you did).
And how to shell those hand-staining walnuts,
and even to go to school next day “proud” of that black stain;
you got to be pretty good at that—
maybe because those cookies were so good!
But you got even better at working in the dirt, bugs and bees and all;
he taught you how to take care of his roses, those prize roses
(people came and took pictures of them),
and the geraniums your mother liked so much,
and even those sweet potatoes in Annie’s backyard garden.
Even more important than all those things,
you watched him work at his desk,
and watched him write in that beautiful Palmer Method
he had learned at business college,
and you saw his care for details; it was the orderly way....
But the most important lesson of all was simply
how to let be what had to be, and put your trust in Me.
Those teaching moment with you were so precious for him—
those father and son moments—
and for Me, too, says the Lord (even if you didn’t know it, I was there);
I know all about Fathers and Sons.
Bye and bye you came to see those learning moments
the same way he did,
which is the way I see them, says the Lord:
They were all things that had to be, and had to be just that way.

You remember, too—how could you ever forget it?—
that last November he spent with you and your sisters,
how precious that was, there on the front porch
(it was an unusually warm Thanksgiving that year).
He had that same look of quiet trust in his eyes,
as he looked at you and at them.
(How tired those eyes were by then.)
It bothered him a little, that he couldn’t go up the ladder any more,
to take care of the house,
to take care of his home—of your mother’s home;
the time had come when he couldn’t keep taking care of it properly,
and it bothered him so.
No words were needed; everybody knew what he wanted to ask:
whether it would be okay for him to go home now,
to come and be with Me,
and whether you would take care of his bride of 60 years
(she was inside taking a nap),
and of course you all said, Yes!
And truly there was nothing more to say.
And you smiled, and he smiled,
because he had taught you all so well to let be what comes to be,
because it needed to be, and he needed to be with Me.

Juan Arturo Madero Blanco
Noviembre de 2003
III

LA REORIENTACIÓN

[En la Villa de Guadalupe]

From now on, says the Lord, you just have to be there
For them;
You only have to encourage them, smile at them, as I do...
A lot...
And try not to nag--too much.
They have to find the way themselves, as you did,
With My help.
Remember?
But encourage them all the time, as best you can.
Show confidence in them, as I do,
And they will turn out fine.
As you did (I suppose);
With My help, of course, says the Lord.
Pray for them, too...
A lot...
But the main thing is just to be there.
(I put you there with them, after all.)

Up until now, there was much for you to do,
Too much...sometimes.
But now the time has come, says the Lord,
(It’s My time, you know),
To let them do, to let them serve,
In their way (which is My way with them),
And they will do everything even better than you
did...sometimes.
They will do wonders, if you stay out of their way.
(I had a reason for putting you there with them.)

Just be there,
Where they are,
Watching, listening...and smiling,
As My Son does from the Tabernacle.
Once there was much for Him to do,
But now He just stays there...for them, as for you.
He just is there, all the time,
And that is enough, and more than enough, says the Lord.
They have all they need, with Him there
For them;
They have all they need with the Bread and the Word, 
His Word--Himself 
In the flesh and in the book. 
They have My Son 
(Don’t you think that’s enough?)

When they need it, 
They have His Cross, because He gives it to them, 
...And when He needs them. 
He stays there too 
For them. 
He is there on the Wood 
As the great Reminder... 
And you are there, too, with Him...and with them 
On the Wood, 
As in the Book, 
And in the Bread, 
With Him, 
With Him there, just being there, all this time--all My time-- 
Encouraging them, supporting them, urging them, 
  nourishing them. 
(Don’t you think that is quite enough?)

You are to watch and listen, then...and pray, says the Lord, 
As My Son does from the Cross. 
And they have His Mother there with them, too. 
What more could they need after her? 
She just stands there, looking and listening, 
Looking at Him, and looking at them, as she does at you. 
She stands there...praying 
For them, as she has for you all these years, 
Listening, waiting, hoping, expecting... 
She is always there 
As she is in all those beautiful pictures, and statues, and 
grottos 
And especially the portrait she left of herself. 
The self-portrait, that autograph. 
She has done all that was needed, 
And now she is just there, 
And they know it; they know she is there...sometimes 
And they are so grateful for that, 
For her presence, as for His...and Mine (when they think of it). 
And with all of that, why would they need you? 
But they do need you, too,
They do need your presence, just being there,
With them, says the Lord,
Close to them (not too close)
Because “you have been with Me all this time”
And with Him
And with her;
Because you have been through it,
And you are a constant reminder
To them--and to Me;
A witness
That all they need is the Wafer, the Word, the Wood, and the
Woman.
They need your example
Of how to use that Bread, that Book, that Beam,
And that most Beautiful One,
That Mother of My Son...
Who is their Mother, too, and yours.
These are all they need
To come to Me at the end, says the Lord.

And they will do very well, very well,
If you are there, too,
Just there, nothing more, for now,
Smiling, encouraging, trusting, entrusting, knowing,
watching,
And above all not speaking much, not saying too much...
(They hear a better Word than yours.)
That is your great service to them now,
In these next years, in these last years;
That is your best way to love, to serve, now,
Until your time is finished, the time I will give you,
Until it is consummated,
As My Son’s time was consummated, says the Lord.

And even then, you will still be there with them
In Him,
As He is still there,
After all this time with you.
You will be there for them even then,
With Him and with Me.
And they will remember, as you remember,
The ones who stood by you in Me
And encouraged you, even if they sometimes nagged...a little.
Now they are with Him and with Me,
And you are so grateful,
As they, too, will be:
Those who are with you now.  
They will be so grateful  
When that time comes, that Great Time, says the Lord.  
You will always be with them--for them--  
And for all those still to come  
After them, after their time is consummated.

It is always enough just to be there.  
No need to do anything now.  
Just always be there...faithful...

Juan Arturo Madero Blanco  
[Escuela de Charles Péguy]  
Noviembre de 1999  
[En el Año del Padre]
IV

“FOREVERMORE”

On the very day the apostle Andrew was accepting An invitation to join the Twelve, She went with him forevermore.

On the very day all the church was expecting The Immaculate Lady’s coming feast, She went with her, forevermore.

On the very day all the world was pleading, “Come, Lord Jesus!” She went to Him forevermore.

What better day to lay this life aside, Over and finished, and finished so well! To start a new Life forevermore.

We were always part of her life here; Now she wants us to share her new Life there, To be with her forevermore.

A Christian of the New Advent, a loving daughter of Mary, An apostle to everyone around her, It all continues, forevermore.

For Aunt Viola
Jack
November 30, 2003
OUR LADY OF HOME

She stood quietly for many years on that old organ that no one ever played.
   We never wondered why nobody really ever played it,
   And we never wondered where it came from, or where she came from,
   or how long she had been there.
She just stood there, not calling particular attention.
   We just got used to seeing her there...if we looked that way,
   Or glanced at her, walking by, into the bedroom
   (the heart of that home).
   She stood on a woolen cloth woven of greens and reds, an Indian motif.
   It kept that old organ from getting dusty...especially in the last years.

She was a slender white porcelain figure, hands together in the mode of prayer,
   Head slightly bowed. Very slender.
   Very quiet, very calm...
   A big contrast to the voices and laughter all around the room,
   when that Family gathered on special occasions.
   They would come to pray the Rosary in that room...most of them.
   It was a rock solid custom in that family...especially in the last years.

She had been broken a few times, and glued back together
   (by the head of that Home...when he was younger and stronger).
   She was always patiently waiting, knowing that in the evening,
   She was always at home; she belonged at home...precisely in that Home.
   She was the real Homemaker of that Home.
   As long as she was there, the Home was there; the Home was made.
We all assumed it would never get unmade; could never come undone,
   that Home...
   Or if it ever did, you could always glue it back together...somehow.
   As long as you still had the pieces...
   The pieces of Home are not the bricks, but the people,
   For the people go on and on, even if the bricks have fallen.
   But we started to wonder about that, too...especially in the last years.

Those Family Rosaries were something...a true Institution,
   After it got established in that Home
   One time no one remembers now; everybody was still at Home.
One day—maybe it was in May or October—the Family Rosary began...
   in the kitchen of that Home, after dinner, doing the dishes...
   That Home (every home) was especially there in the kitchen,
   Because that's the first place you went when you got Home.
   It's where the people were...especially Gramp and Mrs. Loeb.
   But then the weddings started, and the Family grew,
A bigger room was needed...especially in the last years. That’s how the Rosary moved to the room where the Lady stood. We usually called her Our Mother. Everybody understood that there are mothers, but only one Mother. She was the real Mother of that home...and Grandmother, too. When a dozen children joined in the family Rosary, grandchildren... with their Mothers and the Grandmother in the rocker. It was usually the mothers who led the different Mysteries, as they watched out of the corner of one eye To make sure the little ones were paying attention, That they understood what was happening...especially in the last days.

The Institution of the Family Rosary was happening...as it always had Beneath the gaze, the quiet gaze, the silent steady gaze, Of the Mother of that Home, standing still on the old organ. But something much bigger was also happening... a transition. Somehow we all sensed that the Institution would continue in other homes, in the homes of those children When they had their own children, and their own Homes. There would always be a Lady of the Home who would be known as Our Lady...Our Lady of Home...just like on that Last Day.

—on the tenth anniversary of June 2, 1995
VI

RECOGNITION

For Veronica Wheadon

“A woman made her way through the crowd, and with her veil, she...”

That woman (we don’t know her real name) was something.
Love, it was—incredible love—that made her so bold.
She was madly in love
    With the greatest Lover of the ages,
    The One who loved all men and women
        One by one,
    Each one as if the only one,
    The “one and only.”
He was her one and only.
She recognized that, she really knew it,
And she had to act on it.

He recognized her at once; it was only what might have been expected
    From someone like her
    From this woman in particular.
She wasn’t weeping and wailing like the others.
    (He thought they should be more concerned about their children.)
But this woman was different.
    She wasn’t concerned even about herself,
        About her safety in that raging mob.
She didn’t care what they thought of her;
    Or what they might do to her.
She cared only about Him—her one and only—
    And He recognized that right away,
        In spite of his bloody eyes, his sweaty eyes.

It was all He could do to outdo such generosity.
    So He gave her a gift,
The only gift he could give her,
A much better gift,
    So precious a gift...
        (We might have it still—
            some say we do—
            After all these many years.)

This woman had recognized Him about a year ago.
    That was in a crowd to,
A friendlier crowd...

(possibly).

They were all listening to this Teacher,
    Most of them,
    Quite intently,
When suddenly a voice broke the silence.
    There was an interruption,
        And the crowd stirred;
        The crowd murmured.

A woman had called out...and He had heard her.
    (Only men spoke in public.)
    This couldn’t have been any ordinary woman...

He had recognized her instantly, and stopped his discourse.
    It was such a strong voice,
        A voice made bold by love:
        “Blessed is your Mother!
            The one who nursed you!”

How long she had waited to tell Him that!
    He had stopped at this unexpected interruption,
        An interjection that was to become an ejaculation
    To be repeated through the ages ever since
        How many times?
        How many millions of times?
        Even in public!
    Because He knew she had been waiting a long time
        To see Him again.

It was a blessing the Mother had heard before, many years before,
    A precious blessing.
    One He loved so much.
    Now He incorporated it into the lesson,
        The lesson of the Word
        About how to listen to the Word...
            About how to listen to Him.
            And what to listen for.
    That’s why He stopped his discourse.
    It wasn’t an interruption at all.
        It followed so smoothly...
        It enabled Him to make his point more emphatically...

“More blessed is anyone who hears this Word...”
    Who really listens to it,
    “...And puts it into practice!”
        Who really hears it,
        And shows that he hears it...
        By taking it to heart
By making it act.

Just like this woman who cried out.
   Just as she had always done...
      (We don’t know her name.)
But He recognized her in an instant.
It had been so long ago,
   When his Mother was so young, so fresh,
      With the freshness of youth,
      The freshness of innocence,
      The freshness of expectancy...
She had been the first one to hear the Word,
   The first to hear it clearly, directly, distinctly,
      From the very messenger of God.
And to accept it,
   To love it...
And she had kept it all her life.

And so it was only just for this woman to cry out,
   To repeat once again
      A phrase that had not been spoken for so long
         And never before in public!
         Never before in a public place,
         Never before in Jerusalem,
            Even privately there.
What an amazing interruption, what an amazing boldness,
   Bolder than any man,
   Bolder even than any Apostle!
Nobody had ever heard or even thought these words,
   “Blessed is your Mother!”

No wonder He recognized her again,
   As He made his way
      So slowly,
      So painfully,
         Through that raging mob.
He recognized her at once,
   Now he had a chance to thank her,
      The perfect opportunity to thank her
For helping him preach to the people about the Word,
   (A woman helping a man!
      It hadn’t happened since Cana.)
By allowing him to incorporate her words into the Word,
   The very Word of God!
      The Good News that would be proclaimed
         Everywhere
And always
To the ends of the earth!
Now he had a chance to thank her,
And such a “thank you”—
The very imprint of his Face,
   The Face of Love incarnate!
The Face of the Word,
The living Image of the Word,
   The True Image, the “Vera Icon.”
And a new name for this nameless woman,
A name…
A name that would live through the ages,
   VER-ONICA!
The name of loving service,
And service repaid,
Far better!
A name that would live, had to live
Right along with Mary, with Martha,
   And even with Magdalene...
But she…and not they…had a Face to go with it…
(What’s a name without a face?)
To go with the Word, and the memory of the Word,
The very Face of the Word of God in the flesh,
   In the suffering flesh…
   A bloody Face…
The redeeming flesh,
   A placid Face.
The Face she could keep with her forever!
   An eternal Face!
   That very first Relic of his Passion!

(But it was also a chance to thank her
For what she had done
   So long ago,
   So full of love,
She remembered that…
She recognized that.
Then, too,
So boldly,
   Then, too,
When she was so young,
   Not much younger than his Mother...
The Mother she had to bless,
   At long last…)

But now the throng moved on
Shouting and jostling.
   They might have shoved her out of the way,
      Even knocked her down,
      And roughed her up,
   If she hadn’t been so bold, so strong,
   With the boldness, the strength of a madder love,
      A love madder than their hate.
She rushed on ahead,
   Past the weeping women, the city mothers...
      (How they and their children would have to suffer!
         For not having recognized the Face,
         Or learned from the Word.)
And on up the slope.
Three tall stakes were already in place at the summit...
   At the very top....
She got there first
To wait in the gathering gloom.
   A wind was picking up
      And swirling the dust...
There was thunder in the distance,
   And she with no veil to use against the weather.
It was carefully folded and tucked securely,
   Next to her body...
      Very close,
   Held tightly in place...
      That priceless veil.
      That precious icon.

The noise of the crowd grew louder.
Other women were coming, too, to join her at the side,
   Out of the way of the soldiers.
Suddenly He appeared in their midst,
   Being carried,
   Limp,
   Dead already?
But they raised Him on high.
   Opening his arms, stretching them out...
      So He could draw all things to Himself....
She looked around at the other women;
   There was a young man with them, all watching
      In awe,
      In unspeakable sorrow...
And on his arm, the Mother! The very Mother!
   It had to be her.
      She was unmistakable.
      The same features as his,
The same face as his.
But how she had aged!

(It had been so long ago...
   something like thirty years!
But not really so long.
The years flowed together,
Melted by the flame of love.
   They fused in her memory.)

The storm passed quickly—very dark, but no rain
   To turn the dust to mud,
   To soak the unveiled face.
And the wrenching of the ground
With the last thunder clap.
Then suddenly an awful silence...
   An awesome silence;
Many had run away in fear;
   Terrified cries.
She still watched.
No tears came.
It had to be this way.
   She watched the other women, too,
      Most of them quietly sobbing,
         And the boy, too.
But the Mother?
She knew it had to be this way...
   Better than anyone could.
She knew why it had to be this way...
   She knew it was coming all along,
      For more than 30 years,
   And He had assured her
      Strengthened her.

Men came to take him down--
   What was left of him.
And to prepare the burial close by
   In a small cave made in the cliff.
The woman followed with the others,
   Discreetly close...
      Comforting each other and the Mother as they went.
The bare-headed woman drew closer...

Before the little burial band moved away in the dusk,
   The tomb carefully sealed,
The woman drew near to the Mother...
   She had to; how could she not?
The recognition had to be consummated
    Somehow...
So she drew near,
    As she had done as a little girl.
To that Blessed One she had acclaimed
    In public
    Only last year....
Their eyes met.
Their hands reached out.
They grasped each other...
    Tightly.

The Mother recognized those eyes, dark like all the rest,
    But with a certain depth, mixed with excitement.
Where? When?
Yes! Yes! They were both so young then, just girls,
    Close to each other in age.
She had come to that other cave.
    How ironic! The cave with the animals.
And now they meet again at the cave with the Body.
    (The cave of the birth
    And the cave of the death.)
    They are fused together in love,
    In divine love...
    As they had been then.

The same women,
    The same persons,
The very same,
    Clasping each other now
And remembering.
What an unexpected comfort for that Mother!
    As they moved away in the darkness.

It was dark in Bethlehem, too, that night so long ago...
The inn-keeper’s daughter had watched when they came to the door
That tired young man and his wife almost in her final labor.
    “Sorry, but no room to spare,” her father had said,
    In evident distress.
    She, in the corner, hoped and hoped.

They persisted...
    It was the last door, and it was late.
Surely there must be a shed, a barn?
    And he had shown them to the cave down the hill,
That little animal shelter.
    “Sorry, it’s the best we can do...”
They went there is silence, in quiet resignation.
Still she hoped, and wondered....

The night passed in the inn...and in the shelter...
She had worried about them, often waking in the night.
  Almost going down the hill with a lamp,
  But holding back...
Until the first light of dawn.
  She couldn't stay away.
  She had run to the cave.
    (Just like those other women would do in three days,
     To this other cave, the cave of the burial.)
As she drew near in that quiet dawn
There was a newborn cry.
  Her heart skipped.
She hastened back to the inn...
    (Everyone was still at rest.)
  To get a veil, a cloth, a pail of warm water.
Soon at the side of that new Mother,
  Their eyes met,
  Two joined in newfound union,
    A Mother and a young helper.
The Mother took the cloth and gave Him his first bath,
  How beautiful the Child!
  How radiant his Mother!
    There was a young man there, too, keeping watch...
      Her faithful spouse.
The bathing complete,
The Mother handed back the cloth.
  The young girl drew closer,
    To look at the Child.
You could see in her eyes, a great desire,
    Born of great love...
      And hope.
The Mother understood at once,
  And handed her the Baby
    To dry...
      With the veil...
        Especially his head, his face,
          What a beautiful Face!
    How could she ever forget it?
    How could He ever forget her?

As the two women quickened their pace and re-entered the city,
  Deep in their thoughts,
  Reliving those moments,
  Bringing the recognition to a kind of conclusion.
Something remained to be done.
   It would be a great pain,
But the precious gift must go to the Mother;
   It would only be right
For the Mother to have that memorial
   Of the Face of her Son.
They stopped for a moment and the eyes met again.
The woman’s hand moved within,
   Slowly, slowly,
The Mother wondered...
As the woman drew her close
   To press that precious veil
Into her hands.

But when the Mother realized what she had received,
When she searched the veil in the dim light
   Just inside the city...
A muttered recognition shook her body,
   To the very depths of her soul.
It was a very old veil, but not much used,
   Still as fresh as it was in the shelter...
   Amazement!  Amazement!
And the imprint!  The very Face of her Son
   In its agony...

The Mother slowly returned the gift.
   It must not rest with her.
   She had no need of it...
She would be unable ever to forget that Face
   From birth to death...
   Every step of the way,
Keeping each of the images,
   As true, as real as life itself,
   Pondering them in her Heart....
   Praying with them
   Fixed indelibly in her Heart.
She had no need of an imprint,
   A death mask
But still alive...
   Still suffering,
   Still redeeming.
But the woman would need it,
   Her only tie to Him...
   Something He gave to her,
   As the climax of a life of love and of hope.
The woman understood, as she accepted the return,
And with it a grave obligation...
A grave responsibility:
  A messenger of Recognition
To continue his preaching as a woman could...
  In a life of catechesis...
  In a testimonial life
Until she would see the Face again
  To behold forever and ever.
Until then, a life of instruction, of initiation
  Of so many others...
From one who had traveled
  The Way,
And now passed on
  The Truth,
Who had witnessed
  The Life...
  And the death.

It has to be this way.

The woman understood, as they grasped each other in silence,
  And slowly parted....
  “Blessed are you...”
  “More blessed are they...”
The woman made her way through the crowd,
  And with her veil, she...

Juan-Arturo Madero Blanco
Arnold Hall, July 2005

“Jesus, whom now I see veiled,
I ask for what I so thirst for come to be:
That discerning you with Face unveiled,
Blessed I may be in the sight of your glory.”
  —St. Thomas Aquinas, “Adoro Te Devote.”
ON COMING DOWN FROM THE TEMPLE

i

The Baby hadn’t cried. He seemed to be asleep,
Resting in the arms of the strong craftsman.
   Even when the old man asked for Him,
      And He passed from arm to arm,
          Still there was no cry.
He was the very picture of contentment.
It’s because He knew how much those men loved Him;
   How they even adored Him,
      Just a little baby, a newborn,
          But He knew...
He truly knew them,
He knew they would be waiting for Him.

But the Mother had shed a tear or two.
Her face was composed, like the Baby’s,
   Like her husband’s,
      But there was a tear.
A touch of sorrow lingered...
The old man understood that;
He understood more than he knew...
But she knew somehow what it was
That had moved him so...

ii

The old man had not been there to welcome them,
   Nor the old woman either,
Whose life had climaxed those dozen years before.
   Twelve fast years since this place...
By now the Boy had understood
What place, Whose place this was...
   No longer a baby.
He knew what those teachers were up to,
   And He wanted to stay there
To help them understand what they didn’t know,
What they couldn’t know without Him...

   No, Boy, said the strong craftsman,
      Not yet.
   Something else is next,
Something else comes first.
First, we have our work, your Mother and I.
We need you with us if we are to do our work.
The Mother shed a tear or two.
Her face was still composed,
As it always is,
As it always would be,
But a touch of sorrow lingered...
“Didn’t you know...?” her Boy had asked.
Yes, she knew what it was that moved him so,
To lose them like that for three days,
Three whole days,
Three sorrowful days.
She knew only too well...
But the big craftsman knew that a boy
Had to do a boy’s work first,
And then would come the work of a man,
Of a Son of Man,
The Work of His Father.
“Not yet,” he said,
“Come home with us.”

So they came down from the temple
Leaving the lawyers and doctors perplexed.
The Mother was wrapped in her thoughts.
She understood what her husband knew...
She understood more about it,
She understood the Man’s Work,
But He must be her Boy
Before He could be the Son...
The Man’s Work beyond:
To perplex the teachers even more...
So they came down those steps.
The road lay ahead,
And the work of a Boy.
He didn’t look back...
The Road lay ahead,
In silence, in the complete silence,
In the darkness and shadows...
They started along the road and into the dark silence—
Three together,
Three figures to do their Work together.

Juan Arturo Madero Blanco – March 2007
IT WILL BE SO EASY

“Behold, I show you a mystery:
   We shall not all sleep,
But we shall all be changed—
   In a moment,
In the twinkling of an eye....”
   It will be so easy.
It might be at Holy Mass
When the moment comes to greet those around you
   With the sign of peace...
   It will be so easy.
Something unusual strikes you about those faces.
   The five of them are about your age,
Which is to say, fairly well along...
But they are looking so intently at you,
   Big eyes of welcome.
   It will be so easy.
In the twinkling of an eye.
The next thing you know,
These Angels are leading you slowly away.
   So lightly, so easily...
You look back for a second
To see a body slumped in the pew,
   Dressed just as you were
When you came into church.
   It will be so easy.
It will happen in the twinkling of an eye
When the time comes for them
To lead you into Paradise:
   “In paradisem deducant te Angeli...
in civitatem sanctam Ierusalem;
chorus Angelorum te suscipiat,...
et aeternam habeas requiem.”
   So easy...
   “Dies irae”?
   Dies dulce!

Juan Arturo Madero Blanco
Corpus Christi 2007
The Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis