

Timothy Murphy

Our Thirty-seventh Pentecost

Two ways is this our anniversary:
five years ago your cancer was diagnosed.
Tonight I'll kneel to pray a Rosary
and offer homage to the Holy Ghost
who brought two boys together long ago,
steering us to the high plains from the sea,
condemning you to decades in the snow,
me to subarctic darkness of the soul.
Our westward road entailed a heavy toll.

“Like to a lamp that shines in a dark place”
the morning star rose in my heart, then yours.
For one condemned to death, the state of grace
is blinding as the cornered spirit soars
like a sage grouse flushing from bitterbrush
or rabbit brush, seeking the sun's embrace,
primaries pumping in a frantic rush.
We both thirst for a waterhole, where calm
grants to the heart the solace of a psalm.

Footsore

“Tough as the leather on a Red Wing boot,”
said Steve, on Alan’s tolerance for pain.
Though drugs and radiation dull his brain,
today he calls himself “A well-armed coot.”
He’s bought a new support, a cherry cane.

Cherry is hardwood, and the handle bent
into a shepherd crook around the haft
had so much heft our cancer patient laughed,
“The staff of Moses from Mount Sinai sent?
Carving and carpentry? My savior’s craft!”

Grant us the courage, Lord, to cope with loss
when strength deserts us as it drains from him.
There is a stream which every soul must swim
after it walks the Stations of the Cross.

Fathers' Day

i.m. Vincent Murphy

Sunset, and mallards poured down on the pond.
You shot from a low saddle in the hills,
felling them like a wizard with his wand
while I was wading to retrieve your kills.

Ten years since absolution for your sins:
six children by your bed, age eighty-three,
your last words to the family, "Vince wins."
Today our young priest speaks a homily

on God the Father and the Son he gave
to save this sorry world. We're told to pray
for every father resting in his grave,
for each child who is fatherless today.