

How I Learned to Pray

"God dwells among the pots and pans."

Teresa of Avila

God dwells among the pots & pans, I learned the hard way
Grandmother's kitchen toil to save electricity, oil lamps hands' litany

in suds how inconsequential to scrape chicken grease with my nails
each plate & tine a reminder we fed the family tooth grind & heel

Grandmother's ladle clanging gravy boat, iron hooves on the roof
on clouds we're always readying the body to travel toward another life

Grandmother could see the dead & yellow & plum lights off the living
The things a body can be boated spices queen bee's spilled wreckage oubliette

or a womb's pears opening My daughter & I visited a chapel host the color
of barley of pilgrim knees cross debossed in parchment its center's out-glowing

Candles surrounding maybe God pitying my weak will maybe the fleecy
differences between what you remember & what's there my father

guarding my door against night spirits who walk or not, it's the thought
that comforts makes me believe I'm worth saving My father had a holy water

beginning, river baptism what a mercy to start over What a mercy
I haven't had What mercy we can give when our baby son steps

on a toad smaller than a penny when he realizes he has killed one boned world,
we can give him another

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