

## PICTORIAL

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Lives of the saints with persecution remind us  
we have promises to keep, for the lie whether fresh  
on the lips or from long convenience makes conscience  
hoe-down beneath our step the word of that first  
equinox, the grass dry and no spring rain nor thunder  
in July. The heart is said and the foetus once  
formed, there is murder to prevent the inevitable  
kick and cry. Heavy with forgetting the red cunning  
of petals bruises and lets loose in pools a sickly  
blood, we have tied our ankles with cords thin and cautious  
as willow leaves and walked among the peonies where  
laughter dried in the sun and no wall to weep against.

We have promises to keep. Baking in the sun, the forever  
cake disassembles a flower we plucked from profusion  
of grasses while we meditated hunger. Now the flower  
is hungry too, and Rita the wound burning a crimson bud  
in her forehead reminds us of the time for planting.  
Agnes the flames could not devour nor man's eye  
nor beast, succumbs her white fragility headless,  
and the Holy Innocents in the grieving arms where the  
blasphemous sacring flung them wear their ghosts like  
vows we made. O clement and terrible, burning, drowning,  
the earth in their mouth, and all singing and festival,  
procession, profusion, persecution, reminding us.