

DAVID FEDO

Ravens, Lilies

Mid-winter,
 and a frozen landscape of whites and greys,
 but today,
 in this ordinary suburb south of Boston,
 a dramatic morning sun
 and a surprisingly appealing old church,
 its stained-glass windows
 shimmering above the altar—
 a triptych of Jesus as provider, healer, king—
 utterly pleasing and serene.
 Everything seems to be in its place.
 The only sound
 above the Bach prelude
 is the muted sneezing of a pallbearer,
 one of six,
 who completes his duties
 and takes his seat with the others,
 waiting
 like the rest of us.

This death—
 a young woman killed in a terrible spin-out
 three nights ago on the expressway,
 the jaws-of-life too late to do any good—
 has crushed the family,
 friends of my own son,
 who are somehow holding themselves together,
 while the priest finally begins reading
 the familiar passage from Luke,
 about the ravens and the lilies,

although somehow I had remembered the ravens
as sparrows,
with Jesus telling the disciples
not to want too much,
not to complain about their lot,
to accept what is as sufficient to their needs,
to put aside anxieties, fears, dreads.

Now in this church
of such light and beauty,
I am suddenly overwhelmed
by the unhelpfulness of these words,
which do so little to take away
our collective sadness
and uncertainty,
past, present, future.
My son, of course, disagrees.