

**JOHN REPP**

## **The Monsignor Advised**

The Monsignor advised Mary to say “Heaven’s all around”  
when her third-graders’ inevitable questions piped

from their tender throats. The friend across the table  
sipped coffee, numberless thought-blips writhing

like spirochetes. Mary spent a month in Haiti & saw  
how small our typical worries are. The friend dragged

the dray load the dream of Kay Street had dropped.  
A crone had held a broken wine bottle to his carotid

as a gaggle of kids paraded a bedsheet reading  
FEED HUNGRY CHILDREN, the black paint

glinting wet. Mary savored a mouthful of muffin  
as a faint rattling somewhere in the cafe brought

Achille working her rosary back to him, but why  
say anything when the Haitians he no longer taught

were the daughters of the ruling class & Achille  
the only name he recalled & the friendship new

so best to avoid the merest hint he thought  
his pedagogical labors equivalent to the mission

Mary undertook because he didn’t think it,  
being acutely attuned to the workings of his heart.