

In My Father's house *there are many mansions-*
April 2010 for St. Saviour's Church

It always feels like this when there's a death,
the breath departing, a startled ah! and then
silence until a silk chasuble floats down the
nave & its empty hanger sighs in the vestry.

Soul come back, we say when someone sneezes,
a blessing we learn in childhood, along with the
church of laced fingers, "Here is the church/here
is the steeple/ open the door/ here are the people."

No one chases the holy vestments. Outside
the old church consecrated by homeless
sailors, men in rags line up in the rain for
lunch. A sneeze is just a sneeze. Waves still
rhyme on the beach. A crow still scolds other
birds who come too close to its nest. A shingle
moves on the roof, releasing a note from the
organ sleeping in the dream of a Bach cantata.

The men lined up for soup already know the
Gospel of rooms as they move from sidewalk
to sidewalk, tree to tree. Long ago, when we
still believed in miracles, one of the men stood
beside me and watched a three-part lily open
up in the forest. This is my church, he said then,
just as years later he told me the street was his
new forest. He must have been sent to teach us
everything we need to know about leaving.