

# GOOD FRIDAY

*By Vinita Hampton Wright*

I compose my first list  
while Jesus is who knows where;  
I hear there were goings-on through the night,  
that it doesn't look good.  
While his poor mother lingers,  
exhausted at outer doorways,  
I write down a line of tasks that will march me  
through preparations for Sunday dinner.  
The menu, then chilly grocery aisles,  
while his disciples try to blend in with other shoppers,  
earphones attached as if to follow a basketball game.  
They frantically tune in and out of newscasts  
because they couldn't stay with him, just couldn't.

As I sort the mail—gas bill, magazine offers—  
soldiers lash him to a post.  
Soon blood runs everywhere, and short  
devastations quiver from the slashed bend of his back  
and his gasping, bloody mouth.  
I try to unclutter the foyer—where did these stray  
boxes come from? And the rug keeps going crooked,  
like his steps when they finish with him.  
I need yeast bread, sweet yet understated,  
will improvise as usual.  
And they haul him now, to face the crowd.  
Pilate fumes that this has landed with him.  
The three-bean salad I can make early,  
the cake, too, and the bread.

The people, as one, make their choice,  
which you think would be a no-brainer,  
but as I put away cleaning supplies I must  
stop for the noise, the immensity of hatred—  
it's mystifying how abruptly they turned on him—  
and I am weak, drained of all goodness  
because I should have been there, should not have  
trusted that things would work themselves out,  
but they're taking him now to where  
the tools are kept, and I finish what I'm doing  
because what else can I do?

The crowd thunders through my rooms,  
rattling cake pans and paring knives.  
I work away, looking up just once  
to gaze at the point of their passion.  
Of all things, mercy glitters in his gaze  
as he drags the cross through my living room  
and out the back door. My bread is rising;  
something in all of this must fill with lightness.

By the time they hang him up,  
my back is killing me. I do not eat but  
take a sip of wine at precisely the moment  
they touch vinegar to his lips.  
Then the ruddy sky thickens to black.  
My house smells of food, and the corners  
are swept clean. I rest and watch television,  
tucked up where it's warm and un-chaotic,  
I feel him resting, too, unbreathing in a silent cave.  
He and I made it through the day,  
bearing tedium and the ragged walk of hours,  
for the sake of what will happen  
before we even begin the feast.

