



saint mary's press

Listen for a Whisper

Prayers,
Poems,
and
Reflections
by
Girls

Janet Claussen and Marilyn Kielbasa, Editors

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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	6
<i>Voices of faith, hope, and love</i>	8
<i>Breath of God in the soul of girls</i>	38
<i>Sounds of love in the circles of life</i>	58
<i>Listening through tears</i>	75
<i>Murmurs of creation</i>	97
<i>Conversations with God</i>	117
<i>Shouts and whispers of growing girls</i>	148
<i>Index</i>	183

Preface

In June 1998, Saint Mary's Press hosted the first meeting of what was to become the steering committee for the Voices Project, an initiative of Saint Mary's Press to nurture and support the spiritual life of girls and young women. The group consisted of five women who were actively involved in the life of girls as teachers, youth ministers, community organizers, and counselors. The premise of the Voices Project is that girls and boys approach spirituality differently. Each gender brings different experiences, inherent traits, cultural norms, and societal expectations to their spiritual life.

One of the suggestions that came from the steering committee was to compile a book of poems, prayers, and reflections by girls as a way of listening to their voices and peeking into their souls. The book would also be a way for girls to share with one another the joys and struggles of being a girl today.

We sent out about six thousand invitations to schools and parishes across the country, inviting girls in the sixth to twelfth grades to send us their thoughts, using the following questions as guidelines:

- What is your experience of God?
- Who is God for you?
- How has God touched your life?
- What gives you hope and inspiration?
- From whom or from where have you learned most about God?
- Where do you see God?
- What and who is important in your life?

We received an overwhelming response to our invitation. About twelve hundred girls sent in prayers, poems, and reflections. The task that faced us was to choose about two hundred from among those submitted. It was a difficult job because each of the pieces came from the heart and mind of a girl who was hoping to see her work in the book. In the interest of space,

paper, and balance in a variety of areas, we had to set aside many prayers, poems, and reflections that were well worthy of publication. If your piece or that of one of the girls you work with was not included in the book, it is not likely because the prayer was not good or that the reflection was not meaningful. We honestly wish we could have included them all.

Contained in this book are many different voices of girls as they make their way through life, guided by their Creator and the people who accompany them on their journey to wholeness and holiness. We hope that this book of prayers, poems, and reflections is one of many steps along our path to recognizing, hearing, validating, and celebrating the unique spiritual experiences of girls and young women.

Janet Claussen and Marilyn Kielbasa
Editors

Voices of faith,
hope,
and love

I spy with my little eye . . .
a child, God's baby doll.

I spy with my little eye . . .
a light, God's flashlight in the dark.

I spy with my little eye . . .
a bird, God's kite to fly on a sunny day.

I spy with my little eye . . .
a flower, a beauty in God's garden.

I spy with my little eye . . .
the sun, God's light into the room.

I spy with my little eye . . .
a star, God's eyes looking down on every
one of us.

I spy with my little eye . . .
water, a puddle God jumps in on a rainy
day.

I spy with my little eye . . .
a cloud, God's couch to lie on on the
weekend.

I spy with my little eye . . .
the earth, God's dollhouse to play with.

I spy with my little eye . . .
me, God's own image.

Erin A. Frey, age 13
Saint Sabina School, Florissant, MO

I guess I figured it out last year at Fourth of July. I mean I really understood God's plan for us. First of all you have to know that I spend the Fourth at my Grandma Rita's house, and I have about thirty-two cousins on that side of the family. I am best friends with all of my cousins, but there is a special group that I like to hang out with when we get together. We were all together in one corner of the field that Fourth of July, waiting for the others to start shooting the fireworks. While we were all waiting for it to get dark, we started talking about everything and anything that came to mind. We rambled on for a while and then **WHOOSH! BOOM!** We hadn't noticed that they had lit the first rocket. We all "oohed" and "aahed" in appreciation and watched intently for about ten minutes. After that, however, we started to talk again because we have seen this kind of stuff as long as we can remember. For a while I talked to them without looking at them, watching the fireworks, but when Kara said something surprising I looked over at all of them. We continued to talk, this time I was turned and talking to their faces. I started to notice that when it was dark (and it was very dark by now), you could only see outlines, and it was just enough to know that they were still there. However, you could see every face and feature when the fireworks lit up the sky.

Now you might be really wondering how this relates to God. While I was daydreaming in church the next morning, I figured out what was happening. My cousins were like God (don't take me literally, use your imagination). Even when I couldn't see them all the way, I knew they were there. In fact, I was talking to them just like you might talk to God even when you're not sure God is there. The fireworks were what God wants us to be. When they exploded, they illuminated my cousins (or God). God wants us to show others what God is really like. To do this we need a spark, just like a lighter is to the rockets. This spark could be anything from an inspiring passage from the Bible to church leaders or our parents. We might have a long way to travel just to do something for someone else, whether that be in miles or

through overcoming a fear, and that distance may be straight up. Who knows? When we get past those obstacles we are ready to explode. We need to be as big and as bright as we can when it comes to our God. We need to make the biggest impact we can. But most of all we need to illuminate God as brightly and as long as we can. Think about it, find your spark, overcome your obstacles, and shine long and bright and illuminate our God for everyone to see.

*Jamie L. Adams, age 14
Saint James Parish, Liberty, MO*

Have you ever felt so close to heaven and God that all you can do is cry—not out of sadness or loneliness, but out of pure and simple joy? I was blessed to experience this at a youth conference I attended. As a pastor was preaching, he would spontaneously break into simple but moving songs. One that he sang, along with everyone in the stadium, contained the words, “Answer Me!” I had been fighting many internal battles and had been preoccupied with several situations in my life, but the moment this little prayer was being sung to God, tears welled up in my eyes and an internal peace consumed my whole being. I felt the Lord’s presence surround and settle within me. I was overwhelmed with the joy and grace that only can be received from Jesus. The comfort and relief that God’s presence gave me was so entrancing. I stayed as still as I possibly could, not wanting this magnificent feeling to leave me. I could not say a word; I only could shed tears of joy!

*Naomi Dudek, age 16
Saint Pius X Parish, Rochester, NY*

Stormy Faith

I feel your rain of mercy on my shoulders.
I see your beam of healing within my soul.
I hear the boom of your strength surrounding my heart.
Yet I am weak, my eyes are blind, my ears are deaf.
But your storm of heaven continues still.
Why do I lay still?
Why do I shield my eyes?
Why do I cover my ears?
Lord, help me open up to your grace.
Let your rain soak in me, your beam amaze my eyes, and
your boom strengthen me.
God clear me of storms and let the warmth of your Son
soothe my spirit. Amen.

Ellen Wagner, age 13
Annunciation School, Webster Groves, MO

I watched the roaring fire,
Burning brightly in the night.
Mesmerizing colors,
Providing warmth and light.
Time to pray and ponder,
Before the embers die.
Dreams of burning wonder,
Reaching toward the sky.
Please help me to understand,
To walk with you and start.
To only see what really counts,
The power of my heart.
Holy Spirit, burn within,
Fill me with the light.
Spiritual fire help me,
Power, strength, and might.

Meghan Beardsley, age 16
Our Lady of Mercy Academy, Syosset, NY

How can I describe for you
With the language of humans
That which God has given?

How can I relate it to you
This Spirit of love
If you have not felt it?

It is the Spirit that is glorious
That enables you to love
That makes it all good.

How can I even paint the picture?
No color can depict it,
No human hand design it.

It is the Spirit that is shown
That only the heart can see
That the heart believes.

So don't hold yourself away,
Obey your heart.
Go to the Spirit.

The Spirit is strength.
The Spirit is love.
The Spirit is truth.

Julie R. Freyou, age 17
Saint Joseph Academy, Baton Rouge, LA

Religious Doubts

My experience with the Catholic religion is lifelong. Born into a strong Catholic family, I neither knew of nor was exposed to other faiths growing up. My religion wasn't my choice, and my forced faith in God is a result of that. Now, I am in my eleventh

year of Catholic school, and as I start to really learn about Catholicism, I am starting to doubt my faith, even though I reaffirmed it in the sacrament of Confirmation recently. Part of me reasons that God and Jesus are just ideas that people believe in as a source of comfort. I am starting to read the Bible with logic, rather than trusting that it was God's power at work. Doubt is just a small part of me. The part of me that hopes my doubts aren't true prays every night in belief that there actually is a God listening to me.

*K. T. Dixon, age 16
Regina High School, Harper Woods, MI*

I'm falling away from the light in my soul, the love in my life, the truth in the world.

I'm reaching for illusions and ghostly apparitions. My fingers slip through these illusory things, and yet somehow I find them covered with blood.

I feel in my heart a throbbing reminder, a soothing rhythm of something hopeful and beautiful and spiritual.

The sleepy sound soothes me, gently moves me. I can feel it deep within. Somehow I suddenly see it so clearly, the light in my soul, the love in my life, the truth in the world.

No words, only tears, effortless smiles, joy from within.

I have found myself.

I uncovered my strength.

I am inspired.

I am hopeful.

I am flying, guided by the light in my soul, the love in my life, the truth in the world.

*Stacey Ramsower, age 17
Salpointe Catholic High School, Tucson, AZ*

Lord God,

You continually watch over our world;
Please help us to always strive for equality for all people.
Do not let people judge others by the color of their skin or their
sex.

Help us to see through all of the differences,
Instead let us see what is in their hearts.
Help all people feel good about who they are,
Help everyone feel equality,
Not injustice.
Amen.

JoAnne M. Hrabovsky, age 14
Holy Spirit School, Pequannock, NJ

*I pray to the One who created me, and the One who will
take me after my time on earth.*

I pray to the One who has lifted me, guided me, helped me, and
loved me unconditionally.

I pray to the One to whom many are devoted, the One who has
captured the love of many.

I pray to the One who has so much power, who doesn't use that
power to conquer or to gain more power, but uses it to help
people, for love of the people.

I pray to the One who created Jesus, our Savior, the perfect
human.

I pray to the One who accepts all, loves all, and cares for all.

I pray to the One who is free of sin, and to the One I strive to be
like more and more each day.

I pray to God.

Nancy T. Sprovieri, age 12
Saint Charles Borromeo Parish, Skillman, NJ

As I am walking down a row of almond trees,
I whisper, "God where are you? Do You see me?"
I turn around to see a sign due to me,
but instead I see nothing.
Only the humming of the bumblebees.
I repeat once more, "God, why don't you show your face to me,
please?"
I look up to the heavens,
waiting for a bright light to blind my eyes.
But instead all I see is a white dove flying by.
Patiently, again I say, "Why must you be so aggravating, my dear
God, I pray?"
I look at the almond tree,
waiting for a white rose to appear to me,
but all I see is a lonesome pink bud, budding in front of me.
Red-faced and angered, at last I say,
"God, I pray to you, and I believe in you.
But how can I believe in someone I do not see?"
I trip and fall on a stick I did not see,
and my eye catches on a beautiful, pastel-colored rainbow.
And finally it all hits me.
The bees, the bird, the pink bud, and the beautiful rainbow:
These are no regular things.
These are all happenings and gifts from God.
How could I have been so blind?
Every time I asked God to appear to me,
God did—just not in the form I expected it to be.
How grateful I am to God,
for all I have and for all the times God is there
for me and with me!

Mary Terese Galas, age 14
Saint Stanislaus School, Modesto, CA

Hiding in the dark

I sit alone,
cold and trembling in the gray mental haze.
The door cracks slightly open.
My eyes raise,
bloodshot and teary.
A small ray of light
projects on my hand.
I close my eyes again,
wishing for the pain to go away.
I hear the hinges creak,
more light . . .
more heat . . .
Who is here with me in the **dark?**
I shudder.
The cold seizes my body.
I yearn to be warm again,
to feel love. . . .
A silent breeze sweeps over me,
smelling of sweet aromatic flowers.
I am calm.
I feel you near.
I am not alone.
I never was.

*Jennifer Aikens, age 16
Bishop Guilfoyle High School, Altoona, PA*

Dear Wonder,

When I think about the Eucharist, it seems sort of odd that a piece of wheat could mean so much. When I think of God's body I think of more than a small piece of the simplest wheat, but I guess it means more. Christ was one man out of many; therefore the smallness of the Eucharist. Christ was also a simple

man, and so simple wheat. Christ is also part of all of us, and when we receive this Body of Christ, we receive Christ in a more human or realistic form. We come to understand Christ through accepting him in the form of the Eucharist. By giving us the Eucharist, Christ is allowing us to share in his life, and to grow with him. The Eucharist is God's presence in the world, and an invitation to join in this presence.

Julie Heidger, age 18
Saint Joseph Academy, Saint Louis, MO

Sometimes late at night I look
up at the heavens, at the shining stars.
And then I feel they were made just for us,
that every one is a gift from God.

For every flower in the world
is a treasure of endless worth.
So if I have a garden of flowers,
I have a trove of treasures indeed.

For every memory I have of a friend,
there is a story of friendship to tell.
And every time I hear someone laugh
it's a reminder of reasons to smile.

So now I claim with happiness
that I've been blessed,
that I've been given what I value most
and treasure above the rest.

I have felt love, I have known peace.

And so I thank God down on my knees.
Thank you for Life—this precious gift.

Graciela Cristina Carrasco, age 13
Academia María Reina, San Juan, PR

Dear God,

You have given me everything, yet I have nothing to give you in return.

How can I, a mere human, repay you, Creator of heaven and earth?

I may be young, but this I understand: you have given me all that

I have—my life, my family, my talents, my dreams.

Only one thing I can hope is that you will accept all my love.

Amen.

Clare Wrobel, age 12

Saint Joseph School, Lake Orion, MI

Goddition

Death + God = Life

Mean + God = Kind

Frown + God = Smile

Winter + God = Spring

Helpless + God = Independent

Weak + God = Power

Ignorance + God = Knowledge

Decrease + God = Increase

Fruitless + God = Bearing

Enemy + God = Friend

Hate + God = Love

Cold + God = Warm

Captivity + God = Freedom

War + God = Peace

Jealous + God = Content

Sad + God = Happy

Kirsten Johnson, age 12

Saint Pius X, Edgewood, KY

God gives me hope and inspiration. When I'm tired, or when I want to quit something, God is always there to cheer me on. I hear God's soft and gentle voice in my heart saying, "Don't give up!" God's words give me encouragement, and make me feel more confident. I think that even though I don't hear God's voice cheering me on, that if I believe, God will always cheer me on from my heart.

Grace Cho, age 11
Our Lady Help of Christians School, Los Angeles, CA

Are you there God,
How can I tell?
What do you see
When you look at me?
Do you see my hopes and dreams,
Or my accomplishments ripped at the seams?
How can I be sure, God, that you are there,
When I have such a burden to bear?
Maybe it's that you don't have time,
To listen to me whine.
I know you are there God,
I can just tell.
But I still don't know what you see,
When you look deep into me.
I'm sure you look at my hopes and dreams,
And not my accomplishments that are slightly ripped
at the seams.
I am always sure that you are there,
Because you help me carry that burden I bear.
Maybe it's because you love and cherish me,
That you let me be who I want to be.

Molly Medina, age 15
Salpointe High School, Tucson, AZ

Faith

is something
that doesn't come in a
package. Faith is more like
a mountain. In order to be close
to God we have to climb the hill of
life. On that road are many things to slow
us down, rocks and roads that lead us astray
from the true course. Like temptation and sin.
Jesus had to climb that **MOUNTAIN** too. It's not hard
to slip or fall along the way, many of us have. There
have been times when I have slipped, or have just stop-
ped along the way to think, but in the end, I will always
get back up again and start walking toward God. I climb
without fear because I know if I ever fall Jesus will be right
behind me, waiting to catch me, for he too knows how it
feels to fall. He too knows of the struggle to get close to God.
He knows how hard it is to resist temptation. He knows. He
too has been on the mountain with us. Lord, please help me on
my way to you. Encourage my growth and development. Listen
to me and answer my prayers. Catch me when I fall. Amen.

Katie McGroarty, age 13
Saint Odilia School, Shoreview, MN

I don't know if I really believe in God. I do pray to God all
the time. (The funny thing is eight out of ten times what I pray for
comes true!) I think we, as Catholics, want to believe in some-
thing so bad that we create a figure that we can look up to. I
think we are so afraid to die, we want to know that we're going
somewhere, so we don't think we turn into nothingness. At least,
that's how I feel. I want to believe so bad that we're going to go
somewhere. I still have problems believing in God. They say that
God loves us so much and forgives us. Then can you please

explain why God punished Adam and Eve so harshly? If God loved them and forgave them, they'd probably have lived in the garden their whole life. And another thing, if God forgives people, then are all those people in jail going to go to heaven? Does that mean there is no hell and that when we go to heaven there will be ax murderers up there with us?

I hope that there is a God. That way we'll not have wasted our life believing in something that's not even real.

Nicole K. Smith, age 11
Saint Joseph School, West Milford, NJ

Looking through my life, I've realized
You've been there for me when I have cried.

I called out your name, you answered my plea.
I probably didn't deserve it, but you didn't flee.

I never liked church and rarely ever prayed
Though at my side is where you stayed.

When I was in need, the only time I'd ask
I'd pray for you to help me, but that was the past.

I've figured it out, I need you so much—
Your guidance, your love, your spiritual touch.

I love you, God, what else can I say?
I need you tomorrow, I need you today.

Thank you for all that you've given me,
I was blind before, but now I can see.

I see you're the only thing true in my life.
You have helped me through the pain and the strife.

Katie Klein, age 14
Saint Pius X, Edgewood, KY

Be Still and Know That I Am God

Be with me as I walk, for we journey together. Hold my hand so my feet will stay on your path.

Still the noises around me so I can hear your voice; herald your angels' song so I can feel their sweet breath.

And know, Most High, that my feet are moving, my soul is listening, your spirit winds are in my fields and upon my face. That I might glorify your name spoken upon my heart, washed in the waters of your love, forever in your care.

I tremble before you, knowing you know who I am, seeking the forgiveness that only you, Most High, can grant my love.

Am I worthy to stand in your presence? To receive your greatest gift—Jesus. One word and I shall be healed.

Heavenly God, I beseech you to weave a fabric of your love, surround this single thread with joy.

Let it be your cloth upon which the banquet is spread.

*Lesley Gilhooly, age 11
Saint Anne School, Houston, TX*

You may not know love, but love knows you.

That is why everyone is born with love, but must be taught to hate.

Love is patient with you, so you must be patient with love.

Love and trust go hand in hand; so when you lose trust, you question love.

It's your choice, you love or you hate, but remember loving is the key to life, not hating.

*Erin Elizabeth McMahon, age 12
Saint Joseph School, West Milford, NJ*

Infamous Fate

Burn.

One Man **BLAZES** as intense iron

Penetrates two palms.

Dirt devours holy-washed feet.

Thorns of agony scorch One scalp.

Splinter-stricken ears cannot help but

Heed to the wailing,

Moaning of those who are embraced in this

Force of Infamous Fate.

His Holy Father illuminates the scene with flames of
Fiery heat.

Sweat cries,

Tears bleed as

Sadism exiles all peace, rendering rancor and roar.

One blistering body breathes for life

As One Demise delivers salvation for humanity.

Mary Beth Sales, age 15

Villa Duchesne Oak Hill School, Saint Louis, MO

*I know that no matter what happens today
there is nothing I can't handle.*

*I know that I will not go
through anything alone.*

*I know that God is going to be there,
to give me strength and courage to do what I have to.*

*Knowing that gives me hope
and inspiration.*

Megan Salvano

Sacred Heart Parish, Bangor, MI

I made a pledge

Some time ago
To be a servant of God.
To use the talents
That God has blessed me with
To go and help someone.
I signed this pledge
Without a thought of what it really meant.
"I'll go and help people
And smile a lot
And do whatever I can."
Looking back, I realize now
That my pledge to be a friend
Did not end with only a smile
Or a simple lend of hand.
Instead my pledge included
God and all the world,
To bring unity to the torn
smiles to the sad
And dignity to those whom have none.
For it is in Christ's body
Which we receive every Sunday
That we witness God's deepest calling:
To be brothers and sisters to the entire human race
And create the greatest community we can.

*Rebecca Morrison, age 16
Assumption High School, Louisville, KY*

All through the frenzied and frantic day,

Nothing seems to go right,

Friends are mad.

Forgot the homework.

Failed a test.

Waiting for the day to finally be over.

Then at home

Peace and quiet, praying

Brings a calm to the day

That nothing else in the world can bring.

Nothing chaotic, only tranquility,

A new level of being,

A personal, one-on-one relationship

With God.

Amanda Flato, age 14

Saint Agnes Academy, Houston, TX

Divine Peace

I feel the world is closing in on me,
Everything seems dark and stormy, but
there is one thing I can count on.

Whenever I'm in doubt,
Whenever I feel lonely,
Whenever I need inspiration,
There is one thing I can count on.

Suddenly one person comes into my mind,
I feel as calm as a summer's breeze,
Nothing can disturb my peace,
I feel love all around me.
I feel God.

Jennifer Prats-Díaz, age 18
Academia María Reina, San Juan, PR

Where is this God to whom I pray?

The faceless presence
Who fills gaps nothing else can.
Surely he is not in the breeze,
Which cools the body for a second
Then leaves you wanting more.
Surely she is not in what we say,
For no god could be so cruel so consistently.
Surely God could not be in our belongings—
Belongings we adore for a short time,
Complain about when they no longer are as shiny,
And then discard for the newer model.
So where is this Being we implore?
God is anywhere there is beauty and ugliness.
God is everywhere and everything.
We can never escape God's eyes,
His voice,
Her arms.
God is found where good can be created,
Wherever love is experienced,
Wherever we make mistakes.
This is where I see God,
And where God will always be.

*T. R., age 17
Mercy Academy, Louisville, KY*

My Calling

I yearned to see heaven,
And God showed it to me.
I yearned to feel love,
And God gave it to me,
I yearned to be cared for,
And God cared for me.
I yearned for compassion,
And God gave it to me.
I yearned for forgiveness,
And God forgave me.
I yearned to know what God wanted of me,
And God said,
 Go likewise and do for others
 what I have done for you.

*Amanda Maisonneuve, age 16
Regina High School, Harper Woods, MI*

I breathe in the spirit

let the soul go far beyond me
breeze of day
breath of life
 so inspiring
 so enlivening
we all are planted as trees
 to grow in the One we have come from
I grow, I sway
 sweet wind each day
and light to warm
 self that I am
 self that I was
 become
 and return with my God to the land
all home
 and shadows of selves I believe
we flow
 like the grass in the field
 as the wild rushes over
turning each stem
blessing each root
 and connecting and guiding and coming and giving
such love such presence
all showers of dew
 and life reaches far beyond me
 like the branches of a tree
 stretching into the night sky
the prayer of a child whose heart is help,
 cradled by One who just is loving guiding knowing
 who just is
 echoes swirled around desert sands
natural faith
 soul's bond unbroken.

Lauren Michaela, age 17
Little Flower High School, Philadelphia, PA

The Answer

I find myself so often staring,
Staring into vastness and wondering,
Why did God let that happen?
Never understanding and always confused,
My life, spinning out of control.
There are too many questions
And not enough answers.
There is too much to know,
But not enough to learn.
I find myself falling and being trapped,
Feeling confused and frustrated and
Angered because life is not perfect.
But every now and then
I find myself staring and thinking
Maybe this is what God wants to happen.
Maybe this is perfect.
And maybe God wants to shine through me
And have me be the light for others.
“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”
(1 Samuel 3:9).

*Katherine Tymchuck, age 14
Benilde-Saint Margaret Junior High, Saint Louis Park, MN*

*In the credulous eyes of a child
in a mother's hands,
in the fragrance of a blooming rose mild,
I find God.*

In the eloquent intimidation of the ocean,
in the rise of the sun so fair,
in the graceful dancer's motion,
I find God.

And I see all this beauty surrounding me
And I wish to consume it all.
But I know it is in heaven
Where I will know God.

In the faintly whistling breeze,
in the power of love,
in those as luckless as autumn leaves,
I find God.

In the armored warrior's tears,
in the art of music's harmony,
in peaceful rest without fear,
I find God.

And I see all this magnificence surrounding me
And I wish to consume it all.
But I know that it is in heaven
Where I will be with God.

*Andrea M. Suazo, age 17
Fort Worth, TX*

Spirituality is the vision in my soul.

I take a path which I must follow,
to lead a life without pain and sorrow.
Each day brings me new choices,
I lead my life after the One who saved us.
I will live a new life with someone who cares.
When I reach the sky I will be there.
Spirituality is the vision in my soul.
I take a path that I must follow
to lead a life without pain and sorrow.

*Megan Sheila Brennan, age 12
Sacred Heart Academy, Redlands, CA*

I hope to show love

In all I say and do
And shine like God's sun
Bringing comfort to someone.

I hope to be kind and helpful
And very delightful
To be the best I can be
As God intended for me.

*Alison Marie Heydle, age 12
Saint Luke School, Boardman, OH*

God's Colorless Love

They say love is blind.
They say love has no color,
And I believe that.
But why do we live in
Black and white?
Why is color an issue?
If one can see so clearly,
Why can't another?
How can there be change,
In a world of prejudice.

When you find love,
You find it in the heart,
Not in the skin.
I believe in soul mates.
But how can one
Find their mate
If they only look halfway?
In the end,
We are all the same.
God created us all to love,
One another.
Not just one of our color.

So we must love all
And look beyond the apparent,
Search for the heart.
That heart which beats
Inside you and me.
It's playing God's music
For all to hear.
We just need to tune in.

*Tiffany Smith, age 16
Towson Catholic High School, Towson, MD*

I have an aging, cantankerous black cat, who has taught me a few lessons about life. There are several things he absolutely requires: Fancy Feast, someone to hold the door open, a warm lap. Only when his needs are met, and he is curled up in a purring ball, does he make it clear to everyone that God is indeed on God's throne and all is right in the world.

I've decided that sometimes, maybe the less one actually peruses with knowledge and reasoning, the easier it is to understand. As human beings, we are not easily satisfied. There are many things I would like to know, but can't right now. It is a relief to stop fighting with questions. God, please let us have the faith of a contented cat. Help us to accept you without having to know why, and live curled up in your warm, holy lap.

Meredith Gilliam, age 15
Church of the Good Shepherd, Raleigh, NC

Faith is a kiss,
Not a peck-on-the-cheek,
Kiss-your-great-aunt-hello kiss,
But a pure, simple,
Passionate, radiant kiss.
It fills you with inane joy
That you could be part of
Something so wonderful!
Something so breathtaking!
It sweeps you off your feet
And makes even the depths
Of despair a cheery place to be.
This kiss is a piece of you,
Of who you are.
Sometimes the memory slips
To the back of your mind,
And you lose sight of the glory of it.
Yet when you really need it,
It comes pouring back,
To raise your self-esteem
To remind you that you are loved.
You can't say exactly what it is,
Merely that it's like being swept
Through a thunderstorm,
Yet in this turbulent zephyr,
You know no harm will come to you,
Faith is a kiss to the soul.

*Brenna C. Gilbert , age 15
Academy of Notre Dame, Villanova, PA*

God Is All Around Me

I feel God in the
sun
rain
wind
and
snow.

God is all around me.

I see God in the
clouds
stars
water
and
future.

God is all around me.

I hear God at
night
in my dreams
when I speak
and
when I think.

God is all around me.

No matter
where I am
when I am there
or
how I got there,
God will be with me every step of the way.

*Jillian D'Amico, age 12
School of the Holy Child, Rye, NY*

Breath of God
in the
soul of girls