I Hear Mary Reminisce and Muse

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I hear Mary reminisce and muse:

They tell me Pilate asked the crowd, “What am I to do with Jesus called Messiah?”
Restless, tossing in the dark, Joseph used to ask me, “What are we to do with him, Miriam?”
On Calvary today I remember asking, “What am I to do with you once more in my arms?”

When you were taking shape within my womb,
I pondered by the open window, puzzled by it all.
With Elizabeth I had a glimpse of what it meant:
“The Mighty One has done great things for me.
Holy is his name,” she said.

Why distant Bethlehem and not at home, among our own?
Why shepherds? Newborn lambs they understood
But fragile human birth ill met their awkwardness.
And then those foreign-speaking, courteously salaaming
Star-struck men from far away.
Why gold and frankincense and myrrh?

Across the valley from our upper room last night
Is Temple Mount where Simeon foresaw
A piercing sword.
Twelve years later you asserted teenage independence
And were nowhere to be found on
Our return journey from Jerusalem.
Once more I heard your father’s voice:
“What are we to do with him, Miriam?”

Then came the years of piecing it together
In patient perseverance.
Back home in Nazareth they said you had my looks.
At Cana I knew what to ask of you
When the wine ran low —
You knew what to do with barrelled water.
I needed you when Joseph was no longer with us.
Then not long after he had gone
You too were gone from home.
My widow’s question was: 
“What am I to do without you both?”
One day the mother in me wanted you back home.
I baked the bread you liked.
I searched and found you
With the ragged and untrimmed,
With sinners, lepers, tax collectors, outcasts,
Children, bearded men and kerchief-covered women —
I had lost my only son to strangers.

On Skull Hill today I can offer nothing
Beyond my lap and my enfolding arms:
After thirty years I hold you once again.
In Bethlehem I placed you in that feeding trough
And marvelled at your sleeping face.
Now — they’ll take you from my arms
And place you in that tomb
For yet another sleep.

But that tomb will contain you no better than my womb.
The day after Sabbath you will be once again at large:
Dinner on the road, breakfast by the lake.
What was it in meals that so attracted you?
I baked for you through all those years in Nazareth.
Now I meet you once again whenever we break bread.
Is that why you chose to come among us
In Bethlehem, the house of bread?

This group of ours needs looking after:
My mothering begins again.
“The Holy Spirit will come upon you”
Was the explanation Gabriel gave.
Now in prayer I dare to wait once more
For this disturbing Spirit.

I often think of Joseph’s question,
“What are we to do with him, Miriam?”
I think I know the answer now:
“You have to let him go to get him back.”
At least I had to.

— Pat Fitzpatrick CSSp