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Evangelists of the Passion

Tony Lobo
Up the country paths
The wind whispered,
   “I knew you before I formed you
      in your mother’s womb.”
Jerusalem … A disturbance –
The eyes of a soldier fastening on a stranger
   Ordered him to shoulder a criminal’s heavy cross.
Beneath the load, a strange peace enveloped Simon.

Sorrow-filled Seraphia waited her moment, slipped in
to hold her veil before the bloodied face of her Master,
thus stepping into history:
   “Before you were born
I set you apart.”

On Calvary hill, soldiers crushed the legs of two prisoners.
Cassius, the centurion, glanced at the crucified One:
   Valour beheld valour.
Sharply nudging his steed forward
   he lanced the chest above.
A prophecy fulfilled.
The wind sighed,
   “In my book every moment of your life was laid out.”
 Blood and water gushed into his upturned face.
Drawing back, Cassius wiped his eyes.
Startled at his perfect vision — his squint gone,
Immortal words burst forth from him,
   “Truly, this was the Son of God.”

Thereafter, followers named Cassius Longinus
   … the one with the lance
And Seraphia Veronica
   … the one with the true image.
Simon and Longinus became disciples, journeyed afar
   Longinus to martyrdom … to tell all.
Veronica, in Rome with Nicodemus, treasured her holy veil —
On beholding it, the sick Emperor Tiberius was cured.
In the exulting wind the larks sang,
   “I appointed you as my prophet, my witness
   … to the nations.”

But the foremost evangelizer, the most silent one,
In solitary retreat in the hills of distant Ephesus:
   No voice was heard, but
her message, her example went out to all the earth:
   “Retrace my Son’s … Stations of the Cross.”