

First Place Poetry Contest Winner:

The Woods

**By Judith Ryerse, SFO
St. Margaret of Cortona Region**

My backyard woods, a joyful praying place.
Birds choirs rejoicing while insects scurry.
Thick canopy shadowing everything
 above the dead leaf carpet.
Endless green brush strokes with touches of brown.
Feeling God's love, living in security,
Oblivious to the rest of the world.
A daily escape from an empty house.
My woods, a place to hide
 and yet be seen.

The nearby woods, a stark and dismal place.
Dove choirs mourning while faceless bodies brood.
Shadows of filthy blankets and worn tarps
 draped above the cold damp earth.
Dignity robbed people sit in dirty gloom.
Outcasts questioning God, living in fear,
No place in self-righteous society.
Daily, their humanity slowly dies.
Their woods, a place to hide
 and remain unseen.

Special: Made by God

**By Margaret Hunkeler, SFO
Our Lady of Indiana Region**

Every leaf, every flower,
Every animal, every bird,
Is a masterpiece of God's goodness.
Every sunrise and sunset,
Each cloud and every storm –
A masterpiece of God's wisdom.

Every river and valley,
Each mountain and continent –
A masterpiece of God's power.
Every newly conceived preborn
 So minute in the womb,
Is a masterpiece of God's love.

Why cannot humanity
Recognize its eternal Maker?
Why cannot all human beings
Respect the gift of life in an infant,
Fashioned in the image and likeness
 Of God?

Holy Mary

**By Maggie Lippincott, SFO
Our Lady of Guadalupe
Empress of the Americas Region**

Holy Mary Mother of God
did your hair turn gray?
Did it turn a shocking white
 on that awful day?

Did the sight of him up there,
your one and only son,
the lively little boy you held
 when he was so young?

Did the horror chill your blood
as you watched him there?
So much sorrow – so much grief
 surely grayed your hair.

I'm a mother and I know
the stress that sorrow brings
when joy of children turns to pain.
Then must hope have wings.

A Leaf in Winter

**By Gary Simpson, SFO
St. Clare Region**

A solitary leaf
Rasps its way across the frozen landscape
So brittle from the cold
It would shatter on a dream.

Corrections from the last issue:

“Heartprint” should read as follows and the author of “Just Because” is unknown at present.

Heartprint

**By Cathy Pierce, SFO
Our Lady of Guadalupe
Empress of the Americas Region**

Sweet and loving
Ardently longing
Christos
Reconciling to the
Ear of the Father
Daily

Humble compassion
Eternally flowing
Around those
Requesting the heart-blood
Triumphant