“To See What the End Will Be”

(In honor of Sr. Eva Regina Martin, SSF, 1939-2014)

By Fr. Joseph Brown, S.J.

I.

No

They told the first one and then
year after year another no until
the house was built the clothes were
stitched the old castaways and the invisible
babies were fed and soothed

and then there were enough faces to form
a choir of hope healing their own hearts they
twisted scorn into praise and then

dispossessed into the wilderness
they planted harvested and shared among
the restless wandering spirits
a little light a little music and
little by little the world found them
and then they all said yes

II.

it was how

she walked up the path mother prayers

grandmother secrets the dreams
of babies had been rolled up carefully
in remnants from the quilts packed
into the satchel she dragged along
III.

Teaching
touching  holding  more tightly  the very ones most afraid
the world
became a festival of heroes  where not
even dreams could root

But when the lightning flashed that summer morning
And the corrupted sermon that had long silenced
The mother-wisdom and ways of her house
came hurtling back the air
she screamed
her loss
another old woman
(placed there
I know  by the one who refused English to ever
touch her teeth)
said, “But you learned it all
any way you could”

IV.
The satchel
once again
went away
and came back
overflowing for our feast

Was she conjure woman?  Yes.
No one knew how deep her eyes
could see

the yes that was merely static
in the streets
spoke loudly in
iron stone remnants beads and feathers
and whispers never failed to satisfy

and now it is our no that we know
fallen to the floor
we demanded the miracle
that exhausted her
at the last

And no was prayed and sung and caressed
In the vigil of those weeping before the tomb
was readied

Until

the first one
flung the light
and dissolved the shadowed room

reaching

her hand she said now
and the gentle sister of us all

said

yes

yes

--Luke

9 April 2014

Sr. Eva Regina with Dr. C. Vanessa White

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1 Photo by Kathleen Dorsey Bellow, D.Min.