

Merton Dreams of Jesus

*for Brother Patrick Hart
on his golden jubilee of monastic profession
1954-2004*

By **J. T. Ledbetter**

1

In the lavender iris of early evening, He stood naked in Monk's pond,
listening to owls booming in the timber,
remembering all the mute saints standing in their windows,
eyes fixed and staring, as if their words touched an eternal fire
then perished in flames bright as the moonlight uncovering Him now,
bone and belly, as turtles rose around Him through the brightening water,
announcing themselves with a bubble of air, as if to say, this is my breath,
left on the waters of life for You.

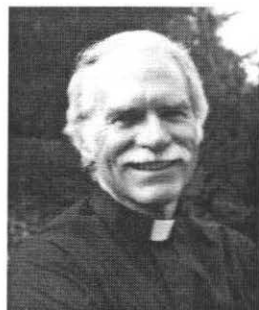
2

He said to look for Him in mirrors, and to touch His wounds in faces
afraid to look up – and to hear Him in the whirling water beneath Kentucky shale
and in the river leaping in your veins
and not be afraid as you walk with Him on the sea of His Eucharist.

3

Then Jesus rode the night train through the blue haze of Kentucky,
screeching over the hobo jungles at the river
where he slept with men on the bum heading north to Chicago,
or to die somewhere in Indiana –
and He said when an early frost touches the tops of the Loblolly Pines,
and sleep is impossible, tell everyone you know and everyone you don't know
to watch for the thin column of smoke bending over the forest from a train
deep in the gorge beside the long, thin river: rise up and pray! He says, and listen
for the night train to Cincinnati chuffing up the long grade out of Louisville –
then get up *quick* in the cold air and dance into your clothes, singing,
watching the lights blink on in the hollows, following Me and your dreams
into Morning.

J. T. Ledbetter recently retired from California Lutheran University, where he taught for 34 years. He is the author of *Gethsemani Poems* (1994) and is a frequent contributor to *The Merton Seasonal* and other journals.



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