

April 29, 2020

I found this poem the second day of the quarantine and I have debated with myself about using it, so I hope it makes you think and doesn't make you sad.

I just do not understand this movement to get back to normal when we have so little knowledge of how this virus works and we continue to hear and see numbers of infections and deaths rising and there is no reliably consistent cure as doctors improvise to save individual lives find that what works for some doesn't work for others.

I want to be back at Church and like many of you, I want to celebrate the Eucharist and the other sacraments and funerals, as we do, and I want things to be as they were, but what I want and what is possible are two different realities at this point.

My fear is that we will find ourselves in a worse situation for a longer time if we rush this.

I do not understand the urgency of opening places of worship because "people are being deprived of their right to worship God." Even the most hardened of the evangelical fundamentalist Christians and Catholics should know that Jesus in the conversation with the, so called Samaritan woman at the well in the fourth chapter of the Gospel of John, clearly taught:

**"But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth;\* and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him. God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth."**

We need to be patient with ourselves and with one another, but we also need to be honest about the reality of our mortal lives.

So, here is the poem:

### **Family album**

by Wislawa Szymborska

*No one in this family has ever died of love.  
No food for myth and nothing magisterial.*

*A doddering second childhood was enough.*

*No death-defying vigils, love-struck poses  
over unrequited letters strewn with tears!*

*Here, in conclusion, as scheduled, appears  
a portly, pince-nez'd neighbor bearing roses.*

*No suffocation-in-the-closet gaffes  
because the cuckold returned home too early!*

*Those frills or furbelows, however flounced and whirly,  
barred no one from the family photographs.*

*No Bosch-like hell within their souls, no wretches  
found bleeding in the garden, shirts in stains!*

*(True, some did die with bullets in their brains,  
for other reasons, though, and on field stretchers.)*

*Even this belle with rapturous coiffure  
who may have danced till dawn - but nothing smarter -  
hemorrhaged to a better world, b i e n s u r,*

*but not to taunt or hurt y o u, slick-haired partner.*

*For others, Death was mad and monumental -  
not for these citizens of a sepia past.*

*Their griefs turned into smiles, their days flew fast,  
their vanishing was due to influenza.*

Wisława Szymborska (1923-2012) was a renowned poet of Polish ancestry winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1996. Her work intelligently explores the moral and ethical values compromised by the political expediencies of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries with sensitivity and strength and wisdom.