

On an Ordinary Day
by Gilda Morina Syverson

While wiping the last lunch dish,
I hear symphonic chanting
like that from the grotto beneath
St. Peter's in Rome.

Rome, that summer
at dawn walking through streets,
Colossal columns, the *piazza*,
up the stairway to the Basilica,
down to the tombs below.
Arias from priests' voices
sing Latin requiems that float
out of one chapel after another.

Another summer, I travel
with my husband from Rome
to Assisi, stay in a *pensione*
situated above the cloistered
monastery of the Poor Clares.
When least expected,
we hear a choir of voices
through the window
of our room. Sometimes
a sonata echoes as we climb
the steep slopes
of the hilly town toward
our temporary home.

Home in this house, I wonder
about this canon of music,
attempt to shake off these chords,
assume it's only pipes ringing
from plumbing in the wall.

But when the chanting segues,
I hold still, listen in fear
that it might go on,
worse yet, stop,
as I complete the ordinary task
of wiping one last lunch dish.