

Vespers at the Chapel of St. Anthony

by Ruben Aguilar

Don't worry—I'm still an atheist.
(*What do you remember?*)

I visited a chapel today,
with red and orange stained-glass
figures of Jesus as He dies on the west
when the sun sets and lights
the chapel and the sunset creeps
across the floor and pews.

The chapel, ablaze with twilight, lays waiting for me,
no one to hear my hurried prayers.
I prayed for you and knelt on the pull-down
cushions made of ribbed polyester
that burned my knees and left pink welts
because I knelt for too long
as the sunset reached for the front of the chapel.

I called you by your first name,
then your middle and last,
then your nicknames:

My Sunshine,
Lindo,
My Adventurer,
My Engineer.

I prayed and felt nothing.
Did I do it wrong,
decades of religious carelessness?

Maybe I didn't pray soon enough,
your name as common

as the brown leaves that clutter
around the fountain in front of the chapel.
Did you change your name?
Or perhaps Death gave you a new one.