

The New Criterion

Poems

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Sunday morning at the Carmelite monastery

by [Elizabeth Spires](#)

My breath,
on this January morning,
a small white cloud

as, shivering, I step
into a room of light.
There, on the bare table,

the plate of bread, the cup.
I have come to sit quietly.
To be filled up.

Advent is passed,
the old Nativity
both mystery and fact.

We felt its approach,
peered, like curious children,
into the bright cave

where the miracle happened.
And now winter, the pilgrim
soul tracking deeper

into snow, unsure of where
it wants to go. Prayers,
for those who pray,

fly silently up to
the vaulted ceiling.
Some, the lucky ones,

pass through, while others
must idly stay and stay.
My thoughts adrift,

I am pulled back
to this moment by a voice
not my own saying,

Today is the first day of ordina ...

Elizabeth Spires' new book of poems, *The Wave-Maker*, was published by Norton in July 2008.

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