

Last will and testament

by [Rodolph Rowe](#) in the [August 17, 2016](#) issue

“The School Sisters of Notre Dame donate brains to Alzheimer’s research.” —*Time* magazine

One morning soon  
in Mankato, Minnesota,  
Sister Matthia will die,  
a glacial calving in the heart of God.

103, she joyfully  
shuffles among an eternity of prepared rooms,  
and at her passing has consented to be undressed  
before the picture windows of the world.

Clothed in the plainsong of never being forgotten,  
loving the Lord God with her all,  
she has practiced  
being a Jerusalem wall,

tucking for more than a century  
into the wrinkled gyri of her brain,  
the desperate, tightly folded slips of petition  
forwarded through her bent obedience to the beyond.

Rare,  
illuminated book of prayer, this quiet mind  
welcomes a final harvest.  
Weighed, sectioned, photographed,

her wafered flesh  
like a lifted host in the researcher’s hands,  
shot with light.