

## **Catholic Colloquies**

by [Sarah Gordon](#) in the [October 2022](#) issue

**1**

### **I invite Simone Weil to dinner**

and though she has a big heart,  
she has little appetite. I've set  
the bread and wine before her  
and bowed my head as though  
in prayer. She's bent, but unbowed,  
and stares into me through those  
scary little round glasses, and I'm  
exposed, defensive as a bird  
in the crosshairs. Her bobbed  
hair, pale face remind me  
of someone I once knew, before  
the war, someone who toiled  
in the auto plant, someone who  
really didn't belong there. That  
girl was awkward, intense, finally  
ill. Had to be taken away. Not  
a worker, maybe a student.  
Always in black, an angular figure  
flinging off her cape, stepping  
up to the assembly line as if  
she were one of us. Now, she sits  
before me. Something about her  
eyes, hard but kind, summons  
me to a strange extravagance,  
to the fulfilling final gesture,  
for a moment reminding me  
of something I wish I had.

## 2

### **I'm serving up soup with Dorothy Day**

Honest to God, I've nothing to say,  
as I stand by her reproachful, skinny  
frame. We all know the resolve  
in that square jaw. Her hands  
are busy, see, strands of her hair refuse  
to stay put, sliding out of that unkempt bun.  
She serves bowl after bowl, efficient, cool  
in her shapeless shirtwaist, washed nearly  
to death. I hear she's some kind of saint,  
someone who knows well what she's about—  
after her long, lonely coming of age,  
the birth of a child, the marches, the fasts,  
the Berrigan boys—but I find her thorny,  
almost cross. This woman's a warrior.  
To the unbroken line of the poor and hungry,  
she's matter-of-fact, magnanimously discreet,  
charmless, not harmless: a white-hot wire.

## 3

### **I joke with Flannery O'Connor about the Trinity**

as we cross the field to the fence.  
Two's company, three's a crowd,  
I crow. Triangle? Equilateral?  
And the Holy Spirit? Is that like  
putting a Bounce sheet in the dryer  
capturing all the electricity?

She's wearing that wide-brimmed  
straw hat, frayed, keeping her face  
safe from the sun. Saving face,  
I think wickedly. Still, she's

patient with my foolishness.

I hear myself gracelessly posing  
my questions, saying something  
one way and then another, as though  
trying on a glove of one size, then  
reaching for something looser, with  
more give, as she bumps along on  
the aluminum crutches, likely savoring  
our distance from the house. I want  
to say Watch the ditch, May I help,  
but my words are trapped in my fear  
for her, my fear of her damned  
sufficiency, complete, entire.