

Orthodoxy

by [Scott Cairns](#) in the [June 2024](#) issue

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—*after Kapouzos [ΝΙΚΟΣ ΚΑΠΟΥΖΟΣ]*

Yes, sweet, and very sweet the darkness
of the nave, and also very sweet
the observant surround, these icons
of our ancient fathers and our mothers,
whose images have acquired a warm
chiaroscuro from centuries
of fragrant smoke—incense, beeswax wafting
for centuries attended by seamless
petition and praise. Such prayers as these
yet fill the air with yet another
palpable sweetness.

So often, the world
appears wretched, choked by a broken,
angry and willfully cruel people.
So often, the world proves wretched indeed,
and its darkness is bitter. How then
to mitigate the assault waiting
just beyond the narthex? How to carry
at least some distance into the world
this fragrance, this sweetness, these images?