At Our Lady of Unanswerable Questions School

by Brian Doyle in the July 26, 2011 issue

Another headlong visit to another burbling seething sea of shaggy miracles.
I wear my good black shirt so as to indicate respect and some small dignity.
We are supposed to talk about writing but as usual things spin away utterly,
And we are arguing about basketball and religion and if Montana is heaven.
I say Montana cannot possibly be heaven because it's snowed for two years
Straight there, grizzlies have learned to ski, has no one read the newspaper?
Then a round kid in back raises his hand. He sort of sneaks it up quietly,
As if he wants to ask a question but he's not actually sure he should. Yessir,
I say, how can I help you? When babies are aborted, he says, is there a birth
Certificate? You can't get a birth certificate if no one ever gave you a name,
Right? And if you are going to get aborted, no one would want to name you.
But if you don't get a name or a birth certificate were you actually a person?
His hand has stayed shyly in the air as he asked his three questions, I notice;
As if as long as his hand was an antenna no one could interrupt him or tease
Him or say his questions were stupid or inappropriate or this is not the place
Nor the time for such questions. But when is the time for questions like his?