

Praying for eyes to see

by [Charles Hughes](#) in the [June 20, 2018](#) issue

They say: "These are useless sacrifices. These men will perish, but the structure of life will remain the same." Even thus, I think, people spoke of the uselessness of Christ's sacrifice and of the sacrifices of all the martyrs for the sake of the truth. —Leo Tolstoy

I've watched the surface of a lake being pitted
Implacably by the blunt blows of raindrops
And felt my heart sink,
Perhaps because the rain seemed never-ending,
Of how it so symmetrically kept pounding
Into that flat surface—
Which lay exposed, spread-eagle and defenseless—
Innumerable wounds, each one, on impact,
A tiny fountain.
My point is I forgot, in my distraction,
The living-dying-living, otherworldly,
Deep-hidden vista,
The gliding, darting, dark-lit, time-lapse beauty,
All flux and permanence together, balanced
Below, unbattered,
As if it were a work of art created
To mean God's mercy in the guise of matter,
As a remembrance—
So when I learn some latter martyr's story,
Lord, let me see beneath the final beating
And what he suffered,
His freezing cell, its brimming, spilling toilet,
The handcuffs, prison bed, bored guards unleashing
Their rubber truncheons—

Let me take in the why of his imprudent
Refusals to recant, try to imagine
The soul inside him.