

Reliquary

by [Paul Willis](#) in the [October 2025](#) issue

del Beato Bonaventura Bonaccorsi

The golden casket lies inside a cage
behind a sword-pierced statue
of the sorrowing Virgin Mary.

It is low to the floor; I sit down
on a cold step of brick and marble
to peer through the glass sides.

At first I spy a simple bed of scattered
blossoms, white and pink, but then I see
that the flowers cover, on a pillow,

a pair of crossed and yellowed bones.
I don't aspire to end up parceled out
like that, but as I think about this friar

of long ago, a maker of peace
between contentious city-states,
I don't resent the effort to preserve

what little is left of him. And if
a breath of his fine dust might pacify
our lust for blood—well, let it.

Though swords still slash the Blessed Virgin,
at her feet there yet remains
a hidden balm of bones and blossoms.

—*Church of Santa Maria dei Servi*