

Annunciation Catholic Church

by [Marjorie Maddox](#) in the [August 2026](#) issue
Published on August 4, 2026

—August 27, 2025

In the small prayer within the world's prayer,
her pale lips move in expectant ways, mouthing,
without sound, *mother, father, brother, priest, nuns*,
her unskinned knees bent obediently on the kneeler,
one palm lightly pressed against the other in supplication,
her brown eyes closed.

In the small prayer within the world's prayer,
there is still room for distractions, the memory
of vacation treats—s'mores, barely toasted
on the outside, gooey inside—no sudden torching
of white; there is room for her six new colored pencils,
carefully sharpened to a point, safe in her blue backpack
in the classroom where she is no longer because
she is thanking God for her new ruler and her new teacher,
the one who smiles with her whole face.

In the small prayer within the world's prayer,
she is a thin pony-tailed girl in uniform
following friends into the sanctuary,
which is not a sanctuary at all.
She is a small girl waiting to taste
God on her tongue, waiting
for a sound that she doesn't understand,
or the crying that she does.

In the small prayer before
the world's heavy prayers
settle like dense smog, almost
covering steeples and weeping
and empty arms, but not quite,
in that prayer that is not a prayer
but one wail layered on top of another,
seventy-times-seven of them,
the small girl remembers her last prayer
as she tried to crawl beneath the pew,
as she heard the stained-glass shatter
right before her quiet Amen.