

To the Church of my Childhood

I loved the Church that loved me as a child.
The Church that immersed me in Churchly activities.
The Church that around me my life was styled
The Church that buffered me against youthful proclivities.

It was my childhood Church that affirmed in me
A belief that my life would happily unfold,
And that we members of the church community
Would always be there “to have and to hold”.

The Church of my childhood came easy to me,
Unchallenged and giving--so joyful in celebration.
The Truth seemed so obvious so that all children could see
A well lighted Way to our mutual salvation.

Time has taken its toll on the Church of my childhood.
But I'm unclear about what time has truly changed.
Is it the Church that's no longer acting as it should?
Or is it my life that has been so totally rearranged?

Racism, sexism and isms not yet created,
All seemed oblivious when I was young.
Now both the Church and I seem ill-fated
Not able to worship and speak in only one tongue.

Church life for me is not like it used to be,
When the highway to heaven was simple to find.
When living seemed based on a timeless theology
When Church people seemingly loved all of mankind.

No longer childlike I'm no longer blinded
To just how desperate and confusing our world can be.
No longer believing that church people are like minded
As the Church of my childhood appeared to me.

I know that the Church that I lost bears not the blame
For at maturity the fruit does part ways with the stem.
As a child my Church and my life seemed one in the same.
Now as an adult it's more difficult to combine them.

I hope the Church that I find will be more forgiving,
More accepting and tolerant—so that after awhile,
I will once again have the Church in my living,
And loving the Church that loved me as a child.

-Bill Anthony