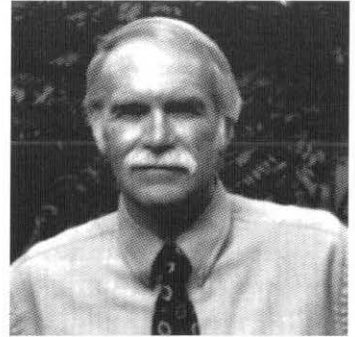


Images in a Dark Church

(To the Monks at Gethsemani)

By J. T. Ledbetter

When I was a child I liked
 the dark cool sound of holy water
 and the moon balancing
 on the shoulders of the saints
 in the windows as they listened
 to the low sounds from the organ
 high in the tower;
 but when a door opened,
 and candles guttered in a side chapel
 where someone knelt in shadow,
 I was afraid. I could not then imagine
 what that meant or why shadows
 rushed in; and I always wondered
 who knelt in the dark
 without a cough or word to let me know
 I was safe and welcome there.
 Now, as my saints catch fire in last light,
 I sing the ancient hymns while
 altar candles burn and wonder
 if the shadows watch and wait
 to cover someone's lonely face
 as they kneel alone in a lonely place.



J. T. Ledbetter

J. T. Ledbetter is Professor of English at California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks, CA. He is the author of *Gethsemani Poems* and a frequent contributor of poetry to *The Merton Seasonal* and other publications.