

Two Poems

By **Frederick Smock**

Sonnet in the Manner of St. John of the Cross

A friend has taken it into his head that he must
sleep out of doors these days, no matter
the weather. He has a lean-to in the woods,
and a blanket, and every evening after vespers
he heads out into the fields, toward his penance.
What is more, my friend is a cantor, and,
every morning, no matter the weather,
his voice is healthy and clear, his cheeks red and
ruddy, his beard robust, and his eyes shining.
I make note of his shoes, well-worn in the manner
of Christ, and his robes, dark and coarse in
the manner of St. Francis. I can imagine
that the animals of the fields attend his dreams,
and that his angels especially amaze the birds.



Frederick Smock

Frederick Smock, chair of the English Department and director of the Creative Writing Program at Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY, is the author of *Pax Intransigentibus: A Meditation on the Poetry of Thomas Merton*. His poetry has appeared in *The Southern Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *The Antioch Review*, *Poetry* (Chicago), *Cold Mountain Review* and elsewhere, and he has published four books of verse with Larkspur Press.

Vespers

(St. Meinrad Abbey)

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Brothers in their black robes go chanting
the psalms, the more helpful psalms,
this new year's eve. They chant in unison,
monotonous – no harmonies – and murmurous.
The year will end tonight, as on every night,
and the world draw down to a close.

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The shrine of Monte Cassino awaits them
on the hilltop, with its sacred images of
elephants bearing away the palace, and
birds delighting above the desert sands,
and the sad Virgin contemplating her brave
sturdy man-child. Candles have been burning
all night long, to everyone's avail.