

Poetry Porch: Poetry

Is That a God You Are Speaking To?

By Barbara Siegel Carlson

What lies inside the black rectangular
box in your hands that you tap
to its hymn with your thumbs,
You cross the street near the Forum
without seeing me watching.
And that white vegetable in your ear—
not wood or stone—that makes you
laugh to the invisible?
When we worked in the catacombs
digging till our fingers bled,
we could only whisper as we scraped
to make shelves for the dead.
All we knew was that we too
would dissolve in the lava and mold.
Still we painted the fish, the good shepherd,
the winged anchor of hope
in the galleries and grit, praying
the newborns would somehow
be warmed in their shrouds.

What do you pray
while your thumbs dance?
The light was faint.
But the one working beside me
had blood I could feel in the damp
of that earth. Today on the roads
I would perish alone out of earth.