

The saints go marching In

By

Bill Butler

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH SCRETCH writes... There is something about the ease with which Bill Butler's verse flows "this Sunday morning as it is and has been each and every Sunday morning," In 'the saints go marching in.' It beats with such a pastoral soothing pulse. Even his theme in this piece concedes to it under the guise of being parochial or even provincial, but otherwise where would a line like this come from, "that same squat clapboard church / sitting somnolently other days under an ancient sycamore" "as surely as sunrise and moon set / the ministers new Cadillac pulls up in front" "solid women and scant men slow to leave" Maybe it's just what comes from taking in all there is to offer in New Orleans, but William's A1 with me, even if he does live below sea level, "placidly waiting the saints arrival."*

The saints go marching in

this Sunday morning as it is and has been each and every Sunday morning

the saints go marching in

that same squat clapboard church

sitting somnolently other days under an ancient sycamore

its two front windows

framing the plain white- washed door
seem to watch us pass by
watch all pass by each day but Sunday
placidly waiting the saints arrival

and this Sunday morning
as surely as sunrise and moonset
the minister's new Cadillac pulls up in front
and within moments the church is alive again
awaiting the saints

the Word is spoken and spread among the saints
their voices raise in praise
blessing all within and those passing
wooden floors creak and groan
accompanied by the scuffling of pews

by mid afternoon the service has been over
lunch shared and eaten
solid women and the scant few men slow to leave
stand in the dusty yard
saints reluctant to march home

our day is blessed
labors relieved until Monday
when the fields fill with equipment
women hum in their starched uniforms
and the slow gleaning of souls shines on

THE POET SPEAKS: *'The saints go marching in': Images such as this surround me daily. I often drive the back rural roads of the lower south and on any given Sunday the gleaning of souls is evident. On a hot July day, 2021, passing one such small, lop-sided church leaning on its concrete block pillars, this image was just there and indelibly etched itself on the first line, and that gave way to the rest.*

AUTHOR BIO: William was born and lives in the south where scenes such as this one are common in rural areas. Currently living in New Orleans, he observes the human condition, matters of the heart, and scenes both real and imagined to investigate in his writing. He has been published in anthologies such as The French Quarter Journal, Truth Serum, The Devil's Party Press, Pure Slush, The Black Cat, River City Poets, Fleas on the Dog, and has three self-published books available through Amazon in both poetry and short fiction.