

THE LENGTHENING OF DAYS

Joanne Epp¹
Winnipeg, MB, Canada

“The season of Lent . . . falls not in midwinter when the
countryside is frozen and dead, but in spring
when all things are returning to life.”
—Mother Mary and Bishop Kallistos Ware²

1.

March: all mildness at the start, sun
almost warm. Then the storm, abrupt,
heavy. Schools and highways shut.
In midmorning glare, a postcard scene:
weight of white on trees, their branches
drooping. Snapped. Neighbours labouring
down their front walks, pushing
the loads they can't lift.
On main roads, traffic turns
snow to slush, sprays brown water
on pedestrians venturing out
for milk and bread, waiting
at street corners, watching for
the light to change.

1. Joanne Epp is a Winnipeg poet, who serves as assistant organist at St. Margaret's Anglican Church. Her first full-length poetry collection, *Eigenheim*, appeared from Turnstone Press in 2015. Her poetry has appeared in such journals at *The New Quarterly* and *Prairie Fire*.

2. Mother Mary and Ware, “The True Nature of Fasting,” [n.d.].

2.

In 1920, my great-grandfather's diary
records a snowstorm on March 31.
There are still potatoes in the bins,
carrots nestled in sand. Jars of beans
and peas, not quite depleted.
But the animals, shut up in barns,
grow thinner as feed grows scarce.
He watches for crows, *those harbingers
of spring*. His muscles yearn
for the garden's vigorous rhythm:
digging, marking rows, planting.
*Oh, Lord, he writes, if possible,
let spring come soon.*³
Today the wind's from the north.
His mail-order seeds are on their way

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, 1940

Joanne Epp
Winnipeg, MB, Canada

Children, have you any fish? (John 21:5)

The day's catch sizzles over a fire
on the sandy edge of the river. Caught, cleaned,
floured, fried in butter. A little holiday
nine miles from home, escape in a pickup truck
packed with whoever wanted to come.
My grandmother flips the fish turning brown
and crisp in the black pan, declares them done.
Divides the fragrant meal among enamel plates,

3. Lines in italics quoted from the diary of Jacob Klaassen, as translated
by Henry Klaassen.

passes them to her children, to the neighbours
and their children. There is enough for each.
Next day, passing the cold ashes of picnic fires,
those about to step into the river thank
Father, Son and Holy Spirit that Pentecost
comes late this year. Chilly enough,
that backward dip, the pastor's hand firm
between their shoulder blades,
their heels pressed into silt, ankles
brushed by current. Going under
one by one, up again with a gasp
and splutter. Suits and white dresses
streaming, heavy with promise,
dressed for a feast

LAMENT

Joanne Epp
Winnipeg, MB, Canada

Someone lost on a distant planet,
disheartened by the colour of its dust.
Passing through a windowless city.

The falling trees. The girl found in the river.
More than you want to believe.

Lonely as the last violin in the world.
A bow hovering over the strings.

We're never the right distance from each other.
Too close, or a wide country apart.

There's only so much you can fix.
History is creased at the edges.
The creek's been paved over.

What happened to the dream
you could do anything?

*After hearing “Lament for Humanity” by Örjan Sandred at the
Winnipeg New Music Festival, 2015.*

Bibliography

Mother Mary and Bishop Kallistos Ware. “The True Nature of
Fasting,” [n.d.], [https://www.goarch.org/-/the-true-nature-
of-fasting](https://www.goarch.org/-/the-true-nature-of-fasting).