

Winter Prose & Poetry Recitation

For each season of the year we try to commit some verse or a prose selection to memory. There is no better way to relish the beauty and power of our native tongue or reflect with delight on the truth that makes us free.

Past selections have included David Middleton's "Of Magnanimity," Christina Rossetti's "In the Bleak Midwinter," a letter of counsel from Thomas Jefferson to a young lad, and last season's poem, William Cowper's "God Moves in a Mysterious Way."

For the winter months of 2013, we'll recite Robert Louis Stevenson's short tribute to Mother Marianne Cope, recently canonized by Pope Benedict XVI for her ministry to lepers on the Hawaiian island of Molokai.

Chronicles magazine contributing editor Tom Piatak wrote the following to introduce Mother Cope and Stevenson's poem:

Cope, who was born in Germany and grew up in New York, answered a call from the King of Hawaii to work with the sick in Hawaii and ended up succeeding the heroic Father Damien [1840--1889] in Molokai. Shortly after Damien's death, Robert Louis Stevenson visited the island. This visit caused Stevenson to write an essay defending the recently deceased Flemish priest from aspersions cast on him by a Presbyterian minister, Rev. Dr. Hyde, whom Stevenson had met in Honolulu. . . Stevenson also wrote this following short poem about Mother Marianne, touching on issues of perennial importance:

**To the Reverend Sister Marianne,
Matron of the Bishop Home, Kalaupapa.**

**To see the infinite pity of this place,
The mangled limb, the devastated face,
The innocent sufferers smiling at the rod,
A fool were tempted to deny his God.
He sees, and shrinks; but if he look again,
Lo, beauty springing from the breasts of pain!
He marks the sisters on the painful shores,
And even a fool is silent and adores.**

Piatak adds that we "would be fortunate indeed if we continue to produce women like Marianne Cope and writers like Robert Louis Stevenson, who was wise enough to be awed by true goodness."