

The Feet Man

by Philip Dacey

The worst job I ever had was nailing
Jesus' feet to the cross on the
assembly line at the crucifix factory.
Jesus! I'd never thought of myself
as religious before that, but when
I had to strike those nails—I figured
it up once—more than two thousands times
a day, my mind began seeing things:
little tremors along the skin, jerks of
those legs that were bonier than
models' legs, his eyes imploring,
forgiving. I swear, if a tiny drop of blood
had oozed out of that wood at my pounding,
I wouldn't have been surprised at all.
I was ripe for a miracle, or a vacation.
All I got was worse: with each blow
of the hammer, I flinched, as if I
were the one getting pierced. Doing
that job day after day was bad enough,
but doing it to myself—my arms
spread out from one end of my paycheck
to the other—was crazy. I began
to sweat constantly, though the place
was air-conditioned. It wasn't long before
the foreman took me aside and told me
I was taking my job too seriously, that
if I wanted to keep it I had better calm down.
He was right. I pulled myself together
like a man and put all pointless thoughts
out of my head. Or tried to. It wasn't easy:
imagine Jesus after Jesus coming down
at you along that line, and you with
your hammer poised, you knowing
what you have to do to make a living.

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