

***Robert West***

## **Rejoice**

This is the day the Lord

to whom we've knelt and prayed  
and homage paid

the one we name our guide  
whose words we've read and weighed

whose music sung and played

for whom the martyrs died  
were burned beheaded flayed

and crucified  
both brave and sore afraid

has made.

## **To a Friend Enduring Time of Trial**

Who knows if you can do it?  
The you already through it:  
that grateful future avatar  
remembers well how strong you are.

## **To a Young Poet Who Doesn't Like to Read**

Incurious as you are about the past,  
I wonder if you think your work could last,

or care that no one ever learns by heart  
the lines of those who never learned the art.

## **A Student Explicator's Pocket Manual with Sample Exercise**

Of course, the first thing you should do is read,  
proceeding word by word and clause by clause,  
not just once through but several times, because  
before you comment on those lines you need

to grasp what they regret, or praise, or plead—  
their grounds for grief, the plot of their applause.  
And punctuation ought to give you pause:  
close reading calls for special care, not speed.

Of course, you think you know all that. What's next?  
You write an essay partly paraphrase  
and partly explanation of the ways

details inflect and form informs the text,  
unfolding *what* it says in terms of *how*.  
Imagine what you'd do with this one now.

## Epilogue

The angel-choir now out of range  
and all the gaping shepherds gone,  
she sighs: the baby needs a change.  
And life goes on.