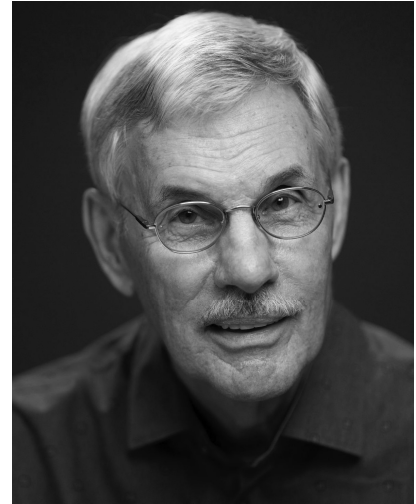


An Interview With Norbert Krapf

1. *What inspired Songs for All Souls?*

In 2007 I had written over 300 poems in twelve months about being a survivor of abuse by our parish priest in my hometown in southern Indiana. I set those poems aside when I became Indiana Poet Laureate 2008-2010 and came back to them and, with the help of two friends, poet William Heyen and my former professor at St. Joseph College, John Groppe, also a poet, I selected 130 of those poems, revised some of them, and published *Catholic Boy Blues*. But before that happened, after those twelve months when I confronted the abuse in my past, my wife, our son, and I took a trip down to Tennessee to relax after the shared intensity of my writing those challenging but healing poems, night and day. Nature is for me very healing.



It was around that time, when we took that trip, that I started to relax and some of the poems that became part of *Songs for All Souls* began to come. These were poems of enjoying what my wife and I would see around our downtown Indy condo, the flowers in our garden, the various birds that were often in nearby trees, and sometimes the doves nesting in a flower box on our balcony, but also the landscape of Tennessee. I love writing short poems about what's nearby.

But there is another, more direct inspiration I must also mention. My wife, Katherine, has two friends who were teaching colleagues on Long Island, Janie and Linda, and the three call themselves "The Ya Ya Sisters." Around the time I was still involved with the *Catholic Boy Blues* poems (2011), the Ya Ya Sisters, who get together every year, met at the Rowe Conference Center in Massachusetts where theologian and former priest Matthew Fox led a conference on "Wisdom of the Mystics." He had just published his wonderful book *The Christian Mystics*, which Katherine knew I would love. I had written poems addressed to some of the Rhineland Mystics in what became *Catholic Boy Blues*, and Katherine bought a copy of Matthew's new book for me. I loved reading that book. If you'll look closely at Section III of *Songs for All Souls*, you may detect that the poems in that section are triggered by some of those passages from *The Christian Mystics*. And I must mention that Matthew, who wrote the introduction for *Catholic Boy Blues*, wrote a wonderful blurb in which he talked about the poems in the new book that begins: "Here Norbert Krapf gifts us with psalms for our time with a depth and clarity that touches

the heart.” Yes, my heart and soul were touched by that sentence! And my soul was healed by writing the new poems.

2. *What do you want readers to take away from Songs for All Souls?*

I hope readers may find it relaxing but also inspiring to read these short, meditative spiritual poems. Maybe it will inspire some readers to write their own parallel poems? That would be pretty cool! There are a number of poems of place in the book. Maybe some readers will write poems about how their place moves, inspires, and gives them spiritual growth. I’ve been writing and publishing poems for over fifty years and have never stopped being moved, inspired, and uplifted by what I consider my “three spiritual centers”: my native southern Indiana, Long Island, where we lived for thirty-four years, and my ancestral Franconia, in northern Bavaria. Let me say that there are not a lot of poetry publishers who are interested in publishing poems that are “spiritual.” Fernwood Press is one of them, and I feel I was blessed to find it and to work with Eric Muhr and you, Emma, and all their staff. *Spirit Sister Dance* is also a spiritual collection.

3. *How did you grow or challenge yourself as a poet writing Songs for All Souls?*

As these 75 poems came to me, at somewhat different times, I was aware that I had to grow spiritually in order to write them. Or, rather, they showed a spiritual growth. I absolutely loved writing these poems. One way to grow is to do something that you love to do, uplifts you, makes you want to share what you’ve done (written, in this case) with others. I know I will greatly enjoy reading these poems to, and sharing them with, audiences.

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