



The Pied-billed Grebe

Sitting in a coffee shop in Austin
Reading Pope Francis's Encyclical,
Remembering last week's trip
To Houston Audubon's High Island rookery.

Spiritual magic leaps from the encyclical,
Written words transcending the division
Between religions, words envisioning -
Words defining - a different human reality,
Words inspiring me to be and do better,
Words attempting to capture the essence
Of life, of love, of human commitment
To each other and to the Earth,
An Earth that provides for us,
An Earth pushed well beyond its limits,
An Earth that needs spiritual rescue,
As do we all.

The pied-bill grebe floats upon the lake waters -
Water separating the nesting trees from predators –
The raccoons and coyotes of the world
That would enter and destroy
The newly emerging life if they could,
Just as predators abound in other forms and places.

The grebe dives and then returns to the surface,
Resuming its daily routine in this sanctuary
Provided by thoughtful caring humans
That raised the money to set this land aside,
A spiritual act of recognition
Of something larger than each of us,

An act of support for the Creation
About which Pope Francis so eloquently writes,
Creation that he asserts manifests the Holy Spirit,
A part of the Trinity, a part of God,
And he asks who are we to defile it?

And I smile as I think upon the journey
That led me to the Pope and a bobbing bird,
The holy man's words and the bird's innocence
And Audubon's action in support of the Earth
And I am filled with joy – filled with hope -
Contemplating High Island, the bird and the Pope
At a coffee shop in Austin
On a very good day to be alive.