Vespers at the Chapel of St. Anthony
by Ruben Aguilar

Don’t worry—I’m still an atheist. 
(What do you remember?)
I visited a chapel today, 
with red and orange stained-glass 
figures of Jesus as He dies on the west 
when the sun sets and lights 
the chapel and the sunset creeps 
across the floor and pews.

as the brown leaves that clutter 
around the fountain in front of the chapel. 
Did you change your name? 
Or perhaps Death gave you a new one.

The chapel, ablaze with twilight, lays waiting for me, 
no one to hear my hurried prayers. 
I prayed for you and knelt on the pull-down 
cushions made of ribbed polyester 
that burned my knees and left pink welts 
because I knelt for too long 
as the sunset reached for the front of the chapel.

I called you by your first name, 
then your middle and last, 
then your nicknames: 
My Sunshine, 
Lindo, 
My Adventurer, 
My Engineer.

I prayed and felt nothing. 
Did I do it wrong, 
decades of religious carelessness?

Maybe I didn’t pray soon enough, 
your name as common