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Poems I Found on My Way to Work: February 9-- Ash Wednesday

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January 20—Clear and Bright

The Wolfswinkel's willow in winter
has veiled her face in sheer gold
as she stands all alone in the garden,
sovereign, mysterious, old.

A stranger, I come to the garden to see
Wolfswinkel's willow aglow
and marvel how something in January
can blossom surrounded by snow.

All the trees in the neighbors' backyards,
the maples and lindens and larches,
stand naked and cold, unable to move,
but the willow is dancing. She arches

her back toward the sun and inhales
the light that the source of light's sent her,
then with alchemy old turns her branches to gold,
the Wolfswinkel's willow in winter.

February 9—Ash Wednesday

This morning, while Christians
all around this blue-green globe received
a fingerprint of ash upon their brows,
you, with your sense of irony,
reached down to touch the dead
land where I sometimes struggle to believe
and left a fingerprint of frost and a dusting of snow.
Grimy streets, old piles of leaves,
corn-stalked fields,
even the hands of the naked trees
were in the night made white, no,
whiter, than snow.