

JANNA PAYNE

head of the catholic church

proudly i sit grading the work of my pupils:  
a+ for the green sky,  
c- for the blue sea,  
*avant-garde* written in the margins,  
not realizing I'm in the margins,  
not realizing my story will later be shared  
to a herd of professionals snickering about  
dementia.

*did he really think he was a teacher?, they'll howl.*

*what's happening to me?,* I whisper  
while scrambling to complete a word search,  
to place the word,  
to place myself in the world,  
to get from the word list to the puzzle  
without losing myself or  
without a professional saying,  
*aw, you're quite the teacher.*

after snack time,  
one of the professionals declares,  
*attention please!*  
*I bought mosaic colouring books —*  
*colouring books for adults!,*  
imploring us to thank her,  
to take the power back, and  
to make peace with our misery.

no such luck,  
but lucky me!

out of nowhere  
another professional notices  
my misery—my greatest need—my greatest  
longing, and  
cheers me up saying,  
*good job, honey!,*  
in her finest baby voice.

*thank you,*  
I say,  
wondering if she realizes  
only disempowered women use pet names,  
only disempowered women coo like babies.

no such luck.

later,  
I comb my hair and strap my best  
nameable, tameable,  
malleable and disempowerable  
self to the altar.

binding my hands,  
I yell,  
*the pope is being lorded over!,*  
*the pope is being lorded over!,*  
hoping to give the herd  
a performance to remember.

*Janna Payne is a Canadian poet. She holds a Masters from Loyola University Chicago. Her work has recently been featured (or is forthcoming) in: BROAD: A Feminist and Social Justice Magazine, Communities, Role/Reboot, Room, The Steel Chisel, and Women and Environments magazine. To read more, visit [www.facebook.com/jannaspeaks](http://www.facebook.com/jannaspeaks).*