

## **Small Kindnesses**

by Danusha Laméris

I've been thinking about the way, when you walk  
down a crowded aisle, people pull in their legs  
to let you by. Or how strangers still say "bless you"  
when someone sneezes, a leftover  
from the Bubonic plague. "Don't die," we are saying.  
And sometimes, when you spill lemons  
from your grocery bag, someone else will help you  
pick them up. Mostly, we don't want to harm each other.  
We want to be handed our cup of coffee hot,  
and to say thank you to the person handing it. To smile  
at them and for them to smile back. For the waitress  
to call us honey when she sets down the bowl of clam chowder,  
and for the driver in the red pick-up truck to let us pass.  
We have so little of each other, now. So far  
from tribe and fire. Only these brief moments of exchange.  
What if they are the true dwelling of the holy, these  
fleeting temples we make together when we say, "Here,  
have my seat," "Go ahead — you first," "I like your hat."