

The Santos

By Helen Molanphy

I am always attracted to sacred spaces. St. Patrick's Cathedral in NYC was a favorite place and today in the Palace Museum I was drawn to the Spanish Santos. The inscription on one of the glass cases said that people petitioned these saints and if they did not get their requests they would turn the statue to face the wall, as if scolding it like a naughty child. Looking at these handcarved and exquisitely painted Santos, I am reminded of the great difference between this kind of art and the mass produced plastic of our age, just as I was in the printing press exhibit. I wandered from the Santos to the primitive art exhibit and found many sacred statues in that section. We know that the primitives also prayed to images of their gods for favors. Did they turn their statues to the wall if they were not heard?

For the meditation time, I walked down the street to an enclave of stores, surrounded by a quiet courtyard filled with trees and Russian sage and bushes with orange berries, my absolute favorite in the fall. I felt at home, because flowers, trees, and water have become my Santos. They are God-given, and remind us of Her/His love. We ask no favor of them and most of the time we ignore them. But now, they and the other parts of nature are asking something of us - - - will we respond?

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