

# Poem for My Wife and Three Daughters

*by* Shann Ray

Last night Ariana our second daughter, only 8,  
wanted to baptize you for your birthday.

Her hair shimmered  
and the face of her joy reminded me of Two Oceans Plateau

in the Beartooth Range in southern Montana.  
As she walked from the sink she carried

a large silver bowl, her small delicate hands  
balanced on the sides, the vessel

filled with water that tilted  
as she moved.

She placed the bowl in front of you,  
dipped her fingers in and met your forehead  
with the sign of the cross.

I saw your body exhale,  
as if your bones and breath had been released

from a great and unforeseen responsibility.  
Daughter, you said. A kiss.  
With her eyes like fires, she kissed you

and we all traveled under water together  
as she touched us each in turn and we abandoned ourselves,  
you and me, and our three daughters who are so young

and more aware than we know.  
We lived  
below the weight of the world until finally

we surfaced and gulped air and found  
we were hungry like wolves,  
and broken like something lost

in the mountains, alone,  
forlorn.

When I opened my eyes  
our daughter still held your face in her hands

smiling  
as she kissed you and kissed you.

