Australian poet Les Murray dedicates all his poetry to the greater glory of God. That is the inscription you see above the crucifix: Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam. He has just published a new poem simply entitled Church.

The wish to be right 
has decamped in large numbers 
but some come to God 
in hopes of being wrong.

High on the end wall hangs 
the Gospel, from before he was books. 
All judging ends in his fix, 
all, including his own. 

He rose out of Jewish, 
not English evolution 
and he said the lamp he held 
aloft to all nations was Jewish. 

Freedom still eats freedom, 
justice eats justice, love – 
even love. One retarded man said 
church makes me want to be naughty, 

but naked in a muddy trench 
with many thousands, someone’s saying 
three true god gives his flesh and blood. 
Idols demand yours off you.

Like Judas, Caiphas and Pontius Pilate, each of us has our idols. We worship at the shrine of ambition, glory, pleasure, security, or self-satisfaction. Whenever we approach one of these shrines, the idols demand our flesh and our blood. We lose ourselves, just when we thought we would gain most for ourselves.

Like Peter, we falter. We have Jesus in focus until we become embroiled in the ways and concerns of our world where right and wrong have no bearings different from success and failure. We wish to be self-righteous rather than doing right for all. We hope to be winners with the mob rather than losers standing with our God.

Like Veronica, the centurion and the thief, we behold the One high on the end wall judging everything in his fix. We long for the freedom that makes everyone free. We aspire to justice for all. We relish the love that loves even the unlovable. In suffering and death, we join Veronica, the centurion and the thief this afternoon looking upon the true god who gives his flesh and blood so that freedom, justice and love might survive even suffering and death, forever.