



*Trinity*  
Columbia, Tennessee  
Photo by Dan Hardison

## The Lily

Mary Oliver

Night after night  
darkness  
enters the face  
of the lily

which, lightly,  
closes its five walls  
around itself,  
and its purse

of honey,  
and its fragrance,  
and is content  
to stand there

in the garden,  
not quite sleeping,  
and, maybe,  
saying in lily language

some small words  
we can't hear  
even when there is no wind  
anywhere,

its lips  
are so secret,  
its tongue  
is so hidden—

or, maybe,  
it says nothing at all  
but just stands there  
with the patience

of vegetables  
and saints  
until the whole earth has turned around  
and the silver moon

becomes the golden sun—  
as the lily absolutely knew it would,  
which is itself, isn't it,  
the perfect prayer?