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How Many Autumn Leaves Are There?

Mark Belletini

Opening Words

We are here

to celebrate our common life together in peace.

Here we may hold up our diverse lives

to the light of shared principle and promise,

enriching our decisions with the wisdom of the ages.

We come with our whole selves to this hour,

jumping into them; grandparents named
Stu and Helen smiling on the porch.

Shoppers crowding Trader Joe's with carts;

Readings

or crawled in my shell

A pencilri 90 syor comparisons

their own species than we do with chimpanzees, another species entirely.

We either shake Bibles and Qu'rans at each other, or hide behind

“But I don’t believe in that!” cries the other man. “How can you be an atheist? Aren’t you lonely and depressed, thinking that there is no God and everything just happened and it doesn’t mean anything...it’s just a joke?”

“Oh, I don’t think it’s all just a joke. And I certainly am not lonely or depressed. Oh, maybe sometimes, but I bet you are too, even though you say you love God.”

“True.”

You see, this is a dual truth. Part of what both of these men (and I wonder, did you see them as white or black or tan or Asian or Native American or in a wheelchair?) experience about their lives overlaps, and actually points to some similar experiences. But these experiences are labeled differently, and then those difference are lifted up into the status of singular truth and the battles and contempt begin, and humanity once again begins to slip down a slippery slope.

But two things can be true at the same time. Green does not have to be false for blue to be true. And, by God, there are hundreds of

color blind might in all truth, have a different experience than I do

in Szyborska's words, "uni.01s are closed23u4 for some, then they

inhave to be opened.

inshape, every age, is in vitality. Every kitten No matter the color, the

vopoem is "unThere are millions of inthem,23u4...has its own shape. No two are alike. Same wi

may be broken. Human hopes
may not be broken.