

'Is there an unforgiveable sin?' by Fr Bede  
Home Retreat resource (2)

I burnt your coat in November,  
Bonfire night, when else?  
God knows, that coat was you;  
stubborn in the way it wouldn't burn,  
awkward in the way it slumped on top of the pile.,  
out of shape with everything,  
the world, itself.

That coat was every morning  
when I couldn't start the day on time;  
you to wash & dress, kids to get to school,  
& you, soiled again; three more lines  
of washing, sheets, pyjamas, towels  
to hang outside.

That coat was each Day Centre afternoon  
when you refused to get into the car & I,  
with murder in my heart-shopping to fetch,  
washing to bring in before the rain,  
dinner burning slowly on the stove-  
would force you in, all sixteen stone,  
then feel the scald of tears.

It played a last trick when it burned;  
a button loosed by flame fell from the fire,  
rolled to rest at my right foot. It lay there  
like a small dog begging amnesty.  
Next morning when I raked the ashes flat  
I picked it up. Now I goes  
everywhere with me.

[ the Brown Button; Gill McEvoy ]