Gender Crunching: Parochial Style

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consider yourself lucky
some children don’t get there
they fail, they fail,
they fall beyond the pale
but you, my boy, you found a way
heaven’s no more than that

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Setting and Prologue: Cathedral of St. Stephen. Good Friday, 1961. The Rosary of the Sorrowful Mysteries has just been completed. All is still except for the dust motes—residents in the liberating light of ancient stained glass windows. The entire grammar school is in attendance. As is the custom, boys are seated in front and the girls are behind them.

Concept for Act I: Daedalus is to Icarus as Japetto is to Pinocchio. Dorothy had no father. We’re not talking about mothers here.

Concept for Act II: The priest, male by virtue of his vocation or priest by virtue of his gender? In any case, he was the only (temporarily) effective constraint on any of the shrieking sisters. A crystallizing moment occurred for Judy in grade 3 upon noticing that his he-ness possessed the capacity to shut up her high-ness.

Act II, Scene 3 (dialogue excerpt): Father Gulagus: “Sister Kristina, you must end this now. Submit to my authority and remove those papers from the bulletin board.”

Concept for Act III: A nationally acclaimed feminist, former nun, prolific author, darling of the talk show circuit, and currently a featured seminar speaker, Dr. Judith Josephs, former provincial in the Order of the Hopeful Sisters, will be lecturing at the local community college, three city blocks from her former convent. Her topic: “The Channeling of Gender Roles: We Took Very Poor Care of Our Girls!” It is expected that tickets will sell out quickly.

Act III, Scene 5 (dialogue excerpt): Dr. Josephs: “In the final analysis it is a shame, and I emphasize the word ‘shame,’ for what this structure, this church of man-made rules did in a rather conscious way to the
mass formation of both, and I mean to clearly emphasize both, female and male identity along with a variety of attendant expectations—some obvious and others not so obvious—many with insidious consequences.

Chorus:

We served at the altar, we boys
We lead in the church, we boys
We were God Almighty's soldiers
We were God's Almighty soldiers
We were served at the altar, we boys