

'So Many Names, There is Barely Room on the Walls of the Heart'

Reflection for Week of June 1, 2020

With more than 360,000 deaths worldwide from COVID-19 and more than 100,000 of these in the United States, we mourn and lament.

Suggested Music: [Saints and Beloved of God – Dan Schutte \(click here\)](#)

The Names

Yesterday, I lay awake in the palm of the night.
A soft rain stole in, unhelped by any breeze,
And when I saw the silver glaze on the windows,
I started with A, with Ackerman, as it happened,
Then Baxter and Calabro,
Davis and Eberling, names falling into place
As droplets fell through the dark.
Names printed on the ceiling of the night.
Names slipping around a watery bend.
Twenty-six willows on the banks of a stream.
In the morning, I walked out barefoot
Among thousands of flowers
Heavy with dew like the eyes of tears,
And each had a name --
Fiori inscribed on a yellow petal
Then Gonzalez and Han, Ishikawa and Jenkins.
Names written in the air
And stitched into the cloth of the day.
A name under a photograph taped to a mailbox.
Monogram on a torn shirt,
I see you spelled out on storefront windows
And on the bright unfurled awnings of this city.
I say the syllables as I turn a corner --
Kelly and Lee,
Medina, Nardella, and O'Connor.
When I peer into the woods,
I see a thick tangle where letters are hidden
As in a puzzle concocted for children.
Parker and Quigley in the twigs of an ash,

Rizzo, Schubert, Torres, and Upton,
Secrets in the boughs of an ancient maple.
Names written in the pale sky.
Names rising in the updraft amid buildings.
Names silent in stone
Or cried out behind a door.
Names blown over the earth and out to sea.
In the evening -- weakening light, the last swallows.
A boy on a lake lifts his oars.
A woman by a window puts a match to a candle,
And the names are outlined on the rose clouds -
Vanacore and Wallace,
(let X stand, if it can, for the ones unfound)
Then Young and Ziminsky, the final jolt of Z.
Names etched on the head of a pin.
One name spanning a bridge,
another undergoing a tunnel.
A blue name needled into the skin.
Names of citizens, workers, mothers and fathers,
The bright-eyed daughter, the quick son.
Alphabet of names in a green field.
Names in the small tracks of birds.
Names lifted from a hat
Or balanced on the tip of the tongue.
Names wheeled into the dim warehouse of memory.
So many names, there is barely room on the walls of the heart.

-- Billy Collins

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine.
-- Isaiah 43: 1



For Your Reflection:

Our call in these times includes working to see the deeper invitation that the pandemic is providing. How might we be conscious of the transformation occurring within ourselves, our communities, the nation, and the global community as we live through this time?



How is it for you to live with the reality of so many deaths -- perhaps more than there is room for on the wall of your heart?

How might we assure that these deaths have not been in vain and that they will lead to a better future for all who inhabit the earth?

Concluding Prayer

May we not forget those whose lives have been lost and all who mourn their passing. May their deaths lead us to pour out our lives to create a better world. Amen.