

**JULY 25, 1993**  
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I'm thinking back over our days together,  
images and quotations  
going in and out of mind.

Seeing the poppies' delicate red blossoms,  
all week long I've been thinking,

"In Flanders Fields the poppies grow  
between the crosses, row on row. . ."

Then  
yesterday  
we saw the crosses. . . .

I was struck not only by the crosses themselves, but also by the  
order everywhere:

trees  
carefully trimmed into rounded shapes,  
along the right angles and straight lines  
of the lily pool and of the walkways.

And the 9000 crosses,  
all angled—  
from wherever we stood,  
perfectly aligned,

every part so orderly and carefully planned.

It is as if—after the Normandy Invasion—

we must impose order  
on the disorder of gliders

downed

in a killing field at Ste. Mere Eglise,

we must impose order  
on the disorder of shells

landing

too near or too far;

as if we must impose perfection  
on the imperfection of plans

most carefully laid

but

most cruelly undone on Omaha Beach;

as if we must impose control  
on the randomness of weather,  
of a summer storm.

In that place, now, we *can* impose order, almost perfection, and  
control,

but

on those June days in 1944

we could not control death,

violent,  
disorderly,  
random.

Something, though, is worth dying for. Men and women said with  
their lives that they *would control* tyranny, that freedom is worth  
dying for.

Along the roads of Normandy, fields have been overrun, conquered,  
and taken yet once again.

In Rouen we imagine Joan on her funeral pyre,  
holding a precious cross  
made of sticks,  
steadfast to what she believed, and

she freed the French people. A short walk away, the bullet holes in  
a stone wall remind us that Joan could not win freedom for other  
generations. There, against that wall in Rouen, people who disagreed  
with the Nazis were lined up and shot.

And so are added

more crosses,

row on row.

Earlier on our journey we encountered a life that gave us words to propel us not only across the channel, but through every new struggle against intolerance of individual freedom: Winson Churchill, 1940, "I have nothing to offer but blood, sweat, toil, and tears."

He knew the value of every life,  
that every life contributes to the whole.

A few blocks from where he spoke those words to a beleaguered British people, at St. Paul's we cross centuries to hear the words of John Donne: "Each man's death diminishes me. Therefore go not to ask for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee."

We were looking at American graves yesterday, but we realize that  
here  
in Normandy  
lie also Poles and Canadians  
  
-and  
Germans.

Each of those crosses represents a unique individual who lived and died.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." We contribute to peace with our minds, with what we *will* for ourselves and for all of the world which it is our privilege to influence.

And we live out what we will;  
every day is our own personal D-Day:  
we decide what to value.

Paul wrote in Second Corinthians, "You show you are a letter from Christ, written not with ink but with the spirit of the living God—not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts."

May peace grow from our choices, for "thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee" (Isaiah 26:3).