

IN MEMORIAM

Margaret C. Rees

1906-1976

1. Now let me honor Margaret Connors Rees.
2. This youngest of four sisters was defined
3. By death: Her mother at the age of six;
4. Her father, suddenly, at twenty-nine,
5. The very day her second son was born;
6. Her husband, Howard Rees, at forty-four.
7. She gave birth to a daughter and two sons,
8. Supported them by teaching second grade.
9. Grandchildren came: six boys and seven girls
10. With whom she hoped to spend more time when she
11. Stopped teaching. Cancer intervened and forced
12. Her to have major surgery and to
13. Be sanitized by chemotherapy,
14. Which conjured up remission for a while.
15. Since subsequent tests came back negative,
16. She winterized her seaside summer home
17. But when an uninvited lesion came
18. This stoic woman had just one defense:
19. A hospital and radiation gun.
20. She suffered greatly but without complaint.
21. It would not have been out of character
22. If she had offered it as sacrifice
23. Or thanks for all the blessings she received.
24. As her health weakened, she began to sleep
25. More often, maybe hoping to wake up
26. Completely cured, but that was not to be.
27. So, on the eighth day of the third month, she
28. Asked to be taken home by ambulance,
29. As if to say she knew the end was near.
30. This was the birthday of her second son,
31. His fortieth. Her wish to celebrate
32. With him eclipsed to a necessity,
33. The way her husband struggled to be with
34. Their daughter, when she turned eleven, years
35. Before. He was there but in five days died.
36. The three stands for the Trinity to Whom
37. She sang hosannas unremittingly

38. And reaped all that she needed to trudge on.
39. The eight, the shape of the caduceus, is
40. An emblem of regeneration to
41. Which she was traveling this day before
42. Ash Wednesday, first of forty days of Lent,
43. The penitential season that precedes
44. The hopeful passage to the Promised Land.

I.

46. Intense pain lacerates my knees, my feet,
47. my solar plexus; putrid odors stick
48. to my pale face like sweat. I cannot eat.
49. My colon's decomposing bit by bit,
50. here in this morphine den of grim defeat,
51. where fear of death and demons won't remit.
52. But I must hear high tide come in once more,
53. the sound of waves against the welcome shore.

II.

54. I penned up stamina to make this trip,
55. and vetoed sedatives, which kindle sleep,
56. so I could count each tree and speed boat slip,
57. that whisked me back from intravenous grief,
58. like whale-borne Jonah, to sand dunes equipped
59. with sea weed smells and mussel-covered reefs.
60. I must hear high tide coming in once more,
61. the sound of waves against the welcome shore.

III.

62. The Sun gives glimmer to Long Island Sound;
63. the graceful seagulls glide, and fear is gone,
64. like spray from breaking waves. The sea abounds
65. with sandpipers and jetties to shoe-horn
66. it in and crowns of beach plum parthenons.
67. It's calm, as I come home to be reborn,
68. am here to hear high tide come in once more,
69. the sound of waves against the welcome shore.

70. She heard high tide come in for three more days,
71. but every breath she took was numbered now.
72. A bell was near at hand to call for help,
73. The one her husband used when his voice failed.
74. It stood again as sentinel of gloom.
75. She had been with her sister, Josephine,

76. A youthful lady on the day she died,
77. To hold her hand and heard her cry out: "Pa",
78. The last word that she spoke. Now, she called out
79. To her: "I'm coming home, Jo"; then, fell mute.
80. That seventh evening hour Peggy Rees
81. Was summoned to her everlasting peace.
82. Her time on earth had ended seven days
83. Before her seventieth birthday, with
84. Its multiple of that which represents
85. The perfect cycle: weeks of seven days
86. And link of Heaven with the tangible,
87. The spiritual three with mundane four.
88. But seven is a symbol, yes, of pain.
89. All these events took place within the course
90. Of Pisces, with its end and its new birth;
91. The final dissolution moment when
92. Decaying left becomes evolving right.
93. She had enduring patience to select
94. Consistently the stout fish on the right.
95. Her funeral was at Saint Margaret's Church
96. In Madison, named for a pious queen,
97. Of Scotland, seven days from coming home.
98. A holy space and recently rebuilt,
99. It was a favorite place of hers, not just
100. Where she attended services and prayed,
101. But where her daughter, Mary, took her vows
102. Of marriage, as well as her sister, Ann.
103. This was her last Mass, her farewell, before
104. Returning to the earth from which she came.
105. The readings for the Mass gave comfort to
106. All those who loved her and now mourned for her.
107. This steadfast woman had the grace to bear
108. The bricks the wheel of fortune threw at her.
109. It was the Ides of March, a Monday, in
110. The second week of Lent. The gospel read
111. Throughout the world that day was one she might
112. Have authorized had she been asked to choose.
113. The full moon was in view as the cortege
114. Crept to the town of Derby, her birthplace.
115. Beside her husband, she was laid to rest.
116. The hearty crocuses, these harbingers
117. Of spring, burst through the frozen soil that day;
118. The way ferocious Mars, the god of war,
119. Who gave us March, was also god of spring.

120. The way the flower is a twin of frost.
121. The way the jonquil, oh so beautiful;
122. Festooned in thrill and pure residual,
123. With fragrance and long, slender leaves has spiked
124. The elements of winter, numb with spite,
125. Its snow filled inclination to dislike
126. The way she straightened and remained upright.
127. This bud of March will not soon pass away,
128. In my mind's eye she's vigorous and gay.

I.

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Line19:

With the old kindness, the old distinguished grace,
She lies, her lovely piteous head amid dull red hair
Propped upon pillows, rouge on the pallor of her face,
She would not have us sad because she is lying there,
And when she meets our gaze her eyes are laughter-lit,
Her speech a wicked tale that we may vie with her,
Matching our broken-hearted wit against her wit,
Thinking of saints and of Petronius Arbiter.

William Butler Yeats, *Upon a Dying Lady*

Line 22:

Be on good courage, I begin to feel
Some rousing motions in me which dispose
To something extraordinary my thoughts.
I with this Messenger will go along.
Nothing to do, by sure, that may dishonor
Our Law, or stain my vow of Nazarite.
If there be aught of presage in the mind,
This day will be remarkable in my life
By some great act, or of my days the last.

John Milton, *Samson Agonistes*

Line 27:

By this will all men know
that you are my disciples,
if you have love for one another.

The Gospel of Saint John, 13/35

Blessed is the man who endures temptation,
for when he has been tried,
he will receive the crown of life which
God has promised to those who love
Him.

Letter of Saint James, 1/12

Then the King will say to those on His
right hand, "Come blessed of My Father, take
possession of the Kingdom prepared for you
from the foundation of the world, for I was
hungry and you gave Me to eat; I was
thirsty and you gave Me to drink;
I was a stranger and you took Me in; naked
and you covered Me, sick and you visited
Me; I was in prison and you came to Me."
Then, the just will answer Him, saying
"Lord, when did we see Thee hungry and feed
Thee, of thirsty and gave Thee drink? And
when did we see Thee a stranger and take
Thee in; or naked and clothe thee? Or when
did we see Thee sick or in prison and
come to Thee?" And answering the King
will say to them, "Amen, I say to you, as long
as you did it for one of these, the least of
My brethren, you did it for Me."

The Gospel of Saint Matthew, 25/35-40

Line 71:

One generation passes and another comes,
but the world forever stays.
The sun rises and the sun goes down;
then, it presses on to the place where it rises.

Blowing now toward the south, then toward the north,
the wind turns again, resuming its rounds.
All rivers go to the sea,
yet never does the sea become full.
To the place where they go,
the rivers keep on going.

Book of Ecclesiastes, 1/ 4-7

Line 78:

No man is an Island, entire of it selfe;
every man is a piece of the Continent,
a part of the Maine; if a Clod bee
washed away by the Sea, Europe is the
lesse, as well as if a Mannor of thy
friends or of thine owne were; any
man's death diminishes me, because I
am involved in Mankinde; and
therefore never send to know for
whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee.

John Donne, *XVII Meditation*

Line 81:

May the Angles lead you into Paradise,
may the Martyrs receive you at your coming,
and take you to Jerusalem, the holy city.
May the choirs of the Angles receive you, and
may you, with the once poor Lazarus,
have rest everlasting. Amen.

Prayer for the Roman Catholic Funeral Mass

May her soul and all the souls of the faithful departed,
through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

Roman Catholic Antiphon

Line 94:

Queen Esther also, fearing the danger
that was at hand, had recourse to the Lord.
And she prayed to the Lord, the God of

Israel, saying: " O my Lord, who alone
art our King, help me, a desolate
woman, who has no other helper but Thee.
Remember, O Lord, and show Thyself
to us in that time of our tribulation,
and give me boldness, O Lord,
King of gods, and of all power.
But deliver us by Thy hand, and
help me, who has no other helper
but Thee, O Lord, who hast the
knowledge of all things."

Book of Esther, 14/ 1,3,12,14

Ask and it shall be given you;
seek, and you shall find;
knock, and it shall be opened to you.
For everyone who asks, receives;
and he who seeks, finds; and to him
who knocks, it shall be opened.
Or what man is there among you,
who, if his son asks him for a loaf,
will hand him a stone;
or if he asks for a fish,
will hand him a serpent?
Therefore, if you, evil as you are,
know how to give good gifts to your children,
how much more will your Father in
Heaven give good things to those who ask him?
Therefore, all that you wish men to do to you,
even so do also to them; for this is
the Law and the Prophets.

The Gospel of Saint Matthew, 7/7-12

Line 105:

But the souls of the just are in the
hand of God, and no torment shall
touch them. They seemed, in
the view of the foolish, to be dead;
and their passing away was judged
an affliction and their going forth

from us, utter destruction. But they are in peace. For if before men, indeed, they be punished, yet is their hope full of immortality; chastised a little, they shall be greatly blessed, because God tried them and found them worthy of Himself. As gold in the furnace, He proved them and as sacrificial offerings He took them to Himself. In the time of their visitation they shall shine, and shall dart about as sparks through stubble; they shall judge nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord shall be their King forever. Those who trust in Him shall understand truth, and the faithful shall abide with Him in love: because grace and mercy are with His chosen ones.

Book of Wisdom, 3/1-9

The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.
In verdant pastures, He gives me repose;
beside restful waters He leads me;
He refreshes my soul.
He guides me in the right paths for His name's sake.
Even though I walk in the dark valley, I fear no evil;
for You are at my side with Your rod
and Your staff that give me courage.
You spread the table before me in sight of my foes;
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Only goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life,
and I dwell in the house of the Lord for years to come.

Psalm 23

Martha therefore said to Jesus:
“Lord, if Thou hadst been here my
brother would not have died. But
even now I know that whatever Thou
shalt ask of God, God will give it to Thee”.
Jesus said to her: “Thy brother
shall rise”. Martha said to Him:

“I know that he shall rise at the resurrection, on the last day”.
Jesus said to her: “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me, even if he dies, shall live; and whoever lives and believes in Me, shall never die. Dost thou believe this?” She said to Him: “Yes, Lord, I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, who hast come into the world”.

Gospel of Saint John, 11/21-27

Line 110:

Be merciful, therefore, even as you Father is merciful.
Do not judge, and you shall not be judged;
do not condemn and you shall not be condemned.
Forgive, and you shall be forgiven.
Give and it shall be given to you;
good measure, pressed down, shaken together,
running over, shall they pour into your cup.
For with what measure you measure
it shall be measured to you.

The Gospel of Saint Luke, 6/36-38

Line 113:

Twenty-and-eight the phases of the moon,
The full and the moon's dark and all the crescents,
Twenty-and-eight, and yet but six-and-twenty
The cradles that a man must needs be rocked in.
For there's no human like at the full or the dark.

William Butler Yeats, *The Phases of the Moon*

Line 115:

Lay her 'l th' earth
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
may violets spring!

William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

Line 117:

There is an appointed time for everything,
and a time for every affair under the heavens.
A time to be born and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant;
a time to tear down and a time to build;
a time to weep and a time to laugh;
a time to morn and a time to dance.

Book of Ecclesiastes, 3/1-4

II.

FAVORITE SAYINGS of MARGARET C. REES

1. Judge not lest you be judged.
2. A chain is as strong as its weakest link.
3. One for all and all for one.
4. He ain't heavy, Father; he's my brother.
5. Share and share alike.
6. You cannot burn a candle at both ends.
7. Never take chances with your health.
8. Think twice before you speak once.
9. Two wrongs don't make a right.
10. Take care of the pennies and the dollars will take care of themselves.
11. Bless your angel heart. (To her grandchildren)
12. Not that, but this.
13. Mark my words.
14. If the cap fits, wear it.
15. Pride goeth before the fall.
16. Don't bit off more than you can chew.
17. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
18. Each crow thinks his is the blackest.
19. That is like the pot calling the kettle black.
20. Nip it in the bud.
21. Comparisons are odious.
22. Water seeks its own level.
23. You have two ears to one mouth.
24. A fool and his money are soon parted,
25. Never a borrower nor a lender be.
26. Fish, like guests, stink after three days.

27. People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.
28. Big oaks from little acorns grow.
29. Bread, oats and goat's milk.
(Response to the question: "What is there for dinner?")
30. A half a loaf is better than none.
31. Rome was not built in a day.
32. Two heads are better than one.

Whatever brawls prevail the street,
Where sister dwells and brothers meet,
There must be peace at home.