

***Behind each number, one beloved face*** by Malcolm Guite

At close of day I hear the gentle rain  
Whilst experts on the radio explain  
Mind-numbing numbers, rising by the day,  
Cyphers of unimaginable pain

Each evening they announce the deadly toll  
And patient voices calmly call the roll  
I hear the numbers, cannot know the names  
Behind each number, mind and heart and soul

Behind each number, one beloved face  
A light in life whom no-one can replace,  
Leaves on this world a signature, a trace,  
A gleaning and a memory of grace

All loved and loving, carried to the grave  
The ones whom every effort could not save  
Amongst them all those carers whose strong love  
Bought life for others with the lives they gave.

The sun sets and I find myself in prayer  
Lifting aloft the sorrow that we share  
Feeling for words of hope amidst despair  
I voice my vespers through the quiet air:

O Christ who suffers with us, hold us close,  
Deep in the secret garden of the rose,  
Raise over us the banner of your love  
And raise us up beyond our last repose.