Ashes, Stones & Flowers:
A Litany of Mourning & Rebirth
For Veterans of War, Terrorism, & Torture

For vibrant lives suddenly and shamelessly sacrificed we lift up the ashes of our loss, O Source of Life.

For the lives that continue, haunted forever by the pain of absence, we lift up the ashes of our remorse, O Wellspring of Compassion.

For the conflagration of flames and nightmare images forever seared into our memories we lift up the ashes of our pain, O Breathing Spirit of the World.

For the charred visions of peace and the dry taste of fear we lift up the ashes of our grief, O Infinite.

For all the deaths that have been justified by turning the love of God or country into fanatical arrogance, we lift up the ashes of our shame, O God.

As we cast these ashes into the troubled water of our times, Transforming One, hear our plea that by your power they will make fertile the soil of our future and by your mercy nourish the seeds of peace.

The people recite the names of the dead.

The people cast the ashes in silence into the river [or a large urn or bowl of water].

For our addiction to weapons and the ways of militarism we lift up the stones of our fear, O Source of Life.

For the ways we cast blame and create enemies we lift up the stones of our self-righteousness, O God.

As we cast these stones into this ancient river, Transforming One, hear our plea:

Just as water wears away the hardest of stones, so too may the power of your compassion soften the hardness of our hearts and draw us into a future of justice and peace.

The people recite the names of the dead.

The people cast the stones in silence into the river [or a large urn or bowl of water].

For sowing seeds of justice to blossom into harmony, we cast these flowers into the river, O Source of Peace.

For seeing clearly the many rainbow colors of humanity and earth, we cast these flowers into the river, O Infinite.

For calling us to life beyond our grieving, we cast these flowers into the river, O Breathing Spirit of the World.

As we cast these flowers into this ancient river, Transforming One, hear our plea:

Just as water births life in a desert and gives hope to the wounded, so too may the power of your nurturing renew our commitment to peace.

The people recite the names of the dead.

The people cast the flowers in silence into the river [or a large urn or bowl of water].

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[A shorter version of this litany was originally written by Rev. Patricia Pearce, then pastor of Tabernacle Church in Philadelphia, for the first anniversary of 9/11. It was expanded and revised by Rabbi Waskow for Armistice Day / Veterans Day 2003. We offer it now, again, for use this coming Tuesday, November 11. The holiness of that day for many nations was set by its being the moment of the end of World War I.]

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