**Psalm 91: 1-2, 9-16 Maria Mankin**

Two years ago this week, I wrote a prayer for Wuhan,

for the silent streets, for the agony and the fear.

I remember sitting at my little desk,

staring out at the doves on my back fence.

I thought then that I understood suffering

because I had become acquainted with grief.

My discipline for Lent that year was to write

a few lines each day. When I read back,

I watch the pandemic begin to unfold -

a paper crane systematically pulled apart

until the hope it represents is just another

sheet of paper, waiting.

I don’t know why I think of Sadako Sasaki,

the little girl who tried to fold a thousand cranes,

at first to heal herself, and then, as she grew weaker,

in hopes of changing the world.

Or Malala Yousafzai, who got married last fall.

I cried when I heard, because in my heart,

she is the girl who survived the impossible,

and who made me believe that all girls could.

Or Gitanjali Rao, Jayden Foytlin, Greta Thunberg,

Milou Albrecht, Xiye Bastida, Autumn Peltier,

Bana al-Abed, Sophie Cruz, Deja Foxx,

Nupol Kiazolu, Sara Mora, Marley Dias…

The list, thank all that is holy, goes on and on -

young women who don’t pray the hurt away

but are compelled to speak up, to create, to heal.

This year, this Lent, when I am tired in a way

that words can’t touch, when a few lines

can’t express what two years has changed,

I have a new practice. I search out these

young love warriors, and I listen.

I fill the silence where my certainty used to live

with their justified rage, their hope for something

greater than what we have given them.

I stand in a pit of vipers, disease at my door,

feet bruised and bloody, and I listen.

I am waiting for my chance to be a messenger,

sent to lift up these blessed bringers of truth

and withstand suffering to protect those

who fold hope for us all.