

## **We Were 10,000**

*(on the occasion of the murders of Maura Clark, Ita Ford, Jean Donovan, Dorotea Kazel)*

We drifted into death  
On our way to work,  
Coming back from mass,  
in Bible study classes  
while hoeing the ground  
in Santa Ana, La Libertad  
and Chalatenango.

In the company of  
children and parents  
In the company of  
lawyers and clients  
In the company of  
pastors and congregants  
In the company of  
doctors and patients  
In the company of  
employers and workers,  
as sisters and brothers  
we entered death.

Some of us went easily,  
knowing only the sharp,  
quick sting which marked  
our transformation.

Some of us went slowly,  
in great agony, like Christ,  
recognizing our own sight  
in the vacant eyes of our assassins;  
in the hands that tensed  
before strangling,  
our own strength;  
in the lips that cursed our persistence,  
our own voice.

Some of us died in a jungle clearing,

our blood's rich protein  
nourishing the forest floor;  
some of us had to be gathered in pieces,  
limbs severed from torsos  
in gulleys and culverts;  
some of us had to be swept  
from the plaza in front of the cathedral  
of San Salvador.

Some of us died  
while you were complaining  
of broken contracts;  
some of us died  
while you worried  
about what to wear;  
some of us died while you  
were filling your basket with groceries;  
some of us died  
while you were arguing  
about who was most oppressed.

Now there are 10,004 of us  
Now you are learning to pronounce our names  
Now we are sometimes mentioned in your papers  
Now we are sometimes remembered in your prayers.

Perhaps when your sons return in boxes  
from faraway places like Chalatenango,  
Santa Ana and La Libertad;  
perhaps when their nightmares  
are filled with our faces,  
perhaps you will startle  
to find we are kin.

~Sheila D. Collins