

Dear Lord,  
we remember the story of Joshua and the children of Israel.  
After forty years of wandering in the wilderness  
you parted the Jordan River  
so the people could cross over into the Promised Land.

You directed Joshua to erect a monument,  
made of twelve stones taken from the center  
of the Jordan River,  
so the people would have  
something to mark the occasion.

Then Joshua said, “When your children ask you,  
‘What are these stones to you? What do they mean?’  
you will say,  
‘The flow of the Jordan was stopped  
in front of the Ark of the Covenant as it crossed the Jordan—  
stopped in its tracks.  
These stones are a permanent memorial for the People of Israel.’”

Just as those stones were a reminder to generations,  
so this stone standing here is a reminder to us.  
When our children ask us  
“What is this stone to you? What does it mean?”  
we will say,  
“It is a permanent memorial for the 16 million  
men and women who sacrificed their youth  
and the 400,000 who sacrificed their lives  
to answer the call of their nation  
to protect and defend the free world.”

“Many of the blessings we know today  
are built upon the sacrifices of this greatest generation.  
They laid down a foundation of  
duty, honor, courage, and self-sacrifice  
that we dare not betray with attitudes  
that too often take for granted the tremendous price they paid  
in a war that claimed 60 million lives world-wide.”

And so, today we bless this stone,  
representative as it is of those who  
served and fought and died for their country;  
for those whose freedom was protected or won;  
for those whose lives were saved and made better;  
and for those who mourned the loss of loved ones  
and friends and beloved colleagues.

And we ask you, Lord,  
to release to us the blessings this stone represents.  
The blessings of duty, honor, courage, and self-sacrifice.  
The blessings of freedom.  
The blessings of a life that gives itself  
to a purpose greater than itself.  
And the blessings of the responsibilities  
that are inherent in all these things.

And Lord, we further implore you to  
redeem our nation from the turmoil of its present conflicts.  
We went to be liberators and  
to build a new kind of nation  
that could become a beacon for the world.  
Too often we find ourselves mired in the fog of war and  
our nation humiliated by the use of the very atrocities  
we pledged to abolish.

Make us, and all our representatives, truly a people of good will.  
Purge from our leadership all who fail this test.  
Restore to America a place of honor and respect  
among the nations of the world.  
Help us citizens and help our leaders  
to fully realize in our own generation  
the promise of hope, liberty and Godliness  
that you enfolded in this nation at its birth.  
And we will give you all the praise for doing so.  
Amen.