

POEM FOR JOE*Richard Berengarten*

JOSEPH ANTHONY BUTTIGIEG (1947–2019)

Now that you're gone, Joe, without fuss, without hint of ceremony, let me cast a few chosen words on the air, so that others may know what kind of man you were, even if only sketchily—your company was always a delight, to be looked forward to, and your conversation witty, sharp, funny, elegant; your quick intuitive vision saw directly through murk, into depths, and wouldn't be fooled or fazed into confusing the one for the other. You pitched yourself against turbulent darknesses to nurture and foster clarity; and your magnanimous gentle heart played central role in your judgments, but without sentimentality or fear, yet with humour and modesty; a scholar-thinker, who loved literature and the unending play of ideas and images across, into, and out of the mind like sunlight striking and streaking over unclouded water as if this light in-and-of the mind itself, gathering and reflecting that of the entire phenomenal world, could, would, and indeed *will* somehow penetrate and influence motives of human behaviour for the better, deepen dignity, grow hope, enrich the enquiring spirit, and so transform the very best of human aspirations into real presence, into *this-now*, into *now-this*, and all its most intimate and infinitesimal holdings and flows into goodness, τὸν καλόν, life worth living, life well lived. Today, as my own heart ticks over and now and then makes sudden small leaps in anticipation of oncoming spring, an overwhelming sadness patrols the acres of my being. Ah Joe, now you're gone there's a hole in the world that won't be sealed over so easily by this year's remaining snows or drained away by our melting and flooding rivers, while still I'll remember you and the rest of this unsung song.