

The Vacant Cross

Michael Bradburn-Ruster

For Gaza, for Syria, for Yemen

...what men do not see they easily forget...

—*St. François de Sales*

Such comfort in that burnished, empty Cross,
its gleam of hope and peace: no hint of wound
or agony, no paradox of Grace
and misery sublimely intertwined.
Reminders of fragility distress
us, dim the happiness we must defend
from dismal images that feed morose
ideas, lest faith be daunted or profaned.

Once, and for all time, our sins were lifted—
why dwell on distant wars, on mothers' wombs
defiled, mazes of dust where houses stood,
where fathers cradle daughters' shattered limbs?
Our thoughts and prayers will heal, the horrors fade...
And none dare claim they have been crucified.