

**Waving Goodbye from Afar**  
**(for Angie, Ian, Vincent, and John)**  
**By Parker J. Palmer**

One by one, their names have been  
exhaled in recent weeks, fading into thin air  
on their final breath: Angie, Ian, Vincent, John.

I talked, laughed and worked with them, we  
cared about each other. Now they are gone.  
No, they do not live on—just watch the world

keep turning in their absence, a tribute here  
and there depending on the fame of the fast-  
fading name. I've always thought it would

be good if a few who loved me sat with me  
as I died. Now, as I learn of friends who've  
taken sudden leave, I'm glad all I can do is

wave goodbye from afar, knowing they can't  
see me. It feels right to offer them an unseen  
final salute, seeking no attention, unable to

distract them from a journey each of us must  
make alone. It must be a breathless climb, the  
kind I've made many times in the mountains

of New Mexico. The last thing I wanted there  
was someone who just had to talk, when it was  
all I could do to climb, to breathe, then stop—

marveling at the view, wondering what's up top.