

On My Mind  
12/21/01

The gap between what is and what ought to be could hardly be greater. We are faced with a war that isn't war; with the heartless slaughter of hundreds of al-Quida in Afghanistan; the unwarranted detention of thousands of Muslims in our own country; the barbaric accusation that a single individual personifies all that is evil (more so than even Hitler?); the virtual promise of invasion of yet other countries; the arbitrary imposition of mandatory death sentences without trial - a stance long since abandoned by more civilized nations; not to mention an increasingly xenophobic attitude toward all international treaties and agreements - and not to mention all the rest of the conflicts on the face of the earth, or the sorrow that permeates in the wake of September 11.

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Yet with the confluence of three of the world's major religions these last few weeks, the world should be overflowing with peace, trust and charity, with a renewed dedication to the principles of godliness, with a spirit of brotherhood, compassion, love and generosity, with acts of kindness and forgiveness, with joy and good cheer.

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The madness casts a pall on the observance of the holidays. But we are not altogether powerless in the face of the war that isn't, and all its repercussions. We cannot, unilaterally or immediately, change the face of the world. But we can protect our homes, our families, ourselves, from becoming infected with the madness elsewhere. We can, among ourselves, with those around us, defend and promote sanity, forbearance, tolerance and understanding. By doing so, we can affect our own lives and the lives of those around us. And in time, if we persist, perhaps the effect of our efforts will bring about some much-needed change.

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This is meant to be the season of love and understanding, of hope and trust, of devotion to God and respect for all his creatures. Let us all resolve to help make it so - in our homes, in our families, in our villages, in our world.

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May the spirit of the season remain with you throughout the year, and may the New Year bring better times for us all!

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<I>The column will next appear on January 4, 2002.</I>